Better Than the Pill: Conservative Family Policy

The Washington Monthly

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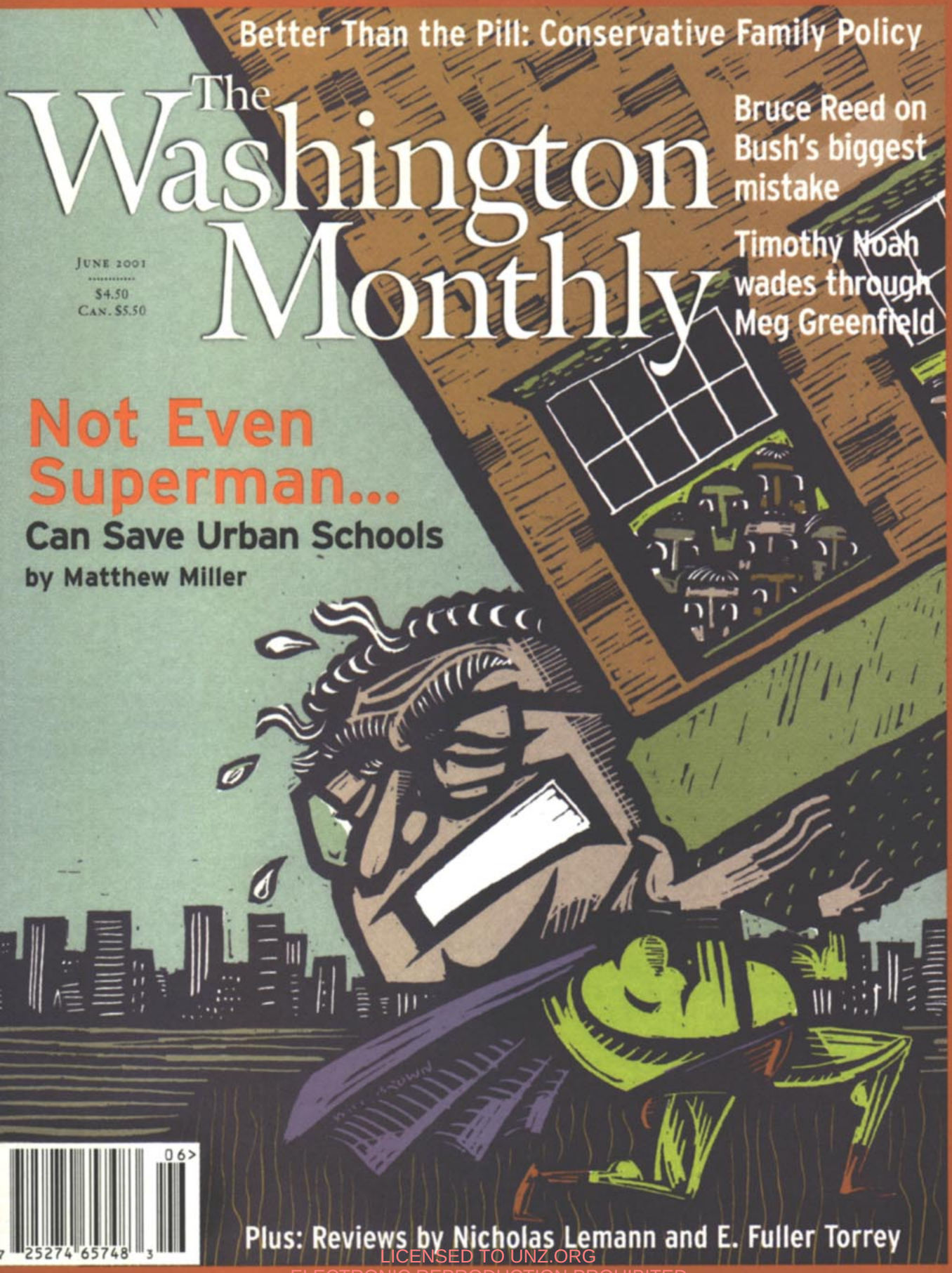
Bruce Reed on Bush's biggest mistake

Timothy Noah wades through Meg Greenfield

Not Even Superman...

Can Save Urban Schools

by Matthew Miller



Plus: Reviews by Nicholas Lemann and E. Fuller Torrey

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Wetlands and Wildlife

America's wetlands – our rivers, streams, lakes and marshes – are one of our great national treasures. From the Florida Everglades to the Great Salt Lake Marshes and the Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta in Alaska, wetlands are vital to our nation's ecosystem. They provide spawning and feeding grounds for nearly one third of our endangered species. They form a natural water filtering system. They help regulate the water cycle. And they help prevent soil erosion.

In past years, thousands of acres of wetlands were lost to industrial and urban growth before their importance was fully understood. Today, conservationists, local communities and state governments are working with farmers and industry to reverse this trend: to protect threatened wetlands and to restore or replace those damaged by past activities. Mining companies are proud to be part of this effort.

Many wildlife species, from aquatic plants to fish and avian waterfowl, benefit from the thousands of acres of wetlands created, preserved and enhanced by mining companies during and after the extraction of gold. Across the American West, gold mining engineers are working with state and federal officials to reclaim and extend wetlands, restore habitats, and implement new techniques for water level management to ensure future habitat protection.

Homestake's 10,000 acre McLaughlin Mine in Northern California provides nest boxes for American kestrels, bluebirds and wood ducks, conducts eagle nest surveys, and helped reintroduce the screech owl. The mine's reservoir area has provided habitat for migrating waterfowl, bald eagles, bears and mountain lions. With the completion of mining activities, the entire mine site and thousands of acres of attached buffer lands will become a wildlife preserve and environmental studies field research station for the University of California.

In the Tunnels wetlands of Nevada, the Newmont Mining Corporation has worked closely with state and federal agencies to improve wildlife habitat, including creating new wetlands and planting thousands of coyote and yellow willow trees to provide new habitats for waterfowl, migrating birds, deer, fox and other wildlife.

The peregrine falcon, once nearly extinct, is now flourishing again. One of its new homes is the wildlife habitat created by the Kendall gold and silver mine in central Montana. In the Southern Californian desert, another threatened species, the desert tortoise, was 'adopted' by the Mesquite mine, which established its own tortoise protection program and transferred 800 acres of preferred habitat to the federal Bureau of Land Management for an enhanced tortoise management area.

In California's Panamint mountain range, another mining company joined with federal and state agencies in a three-year cooperative research program to increase knowledge of the biology of the desert bighorn sheep, studying their movement, diet and herd health.

Mining companies are not often associated in the public mind with the protection of wetlands and wildlife, but it is a major part of what we do. As an industry, we are committed to protecting our natural environment. Many of our wetland and wildlife protection programs have been singled out for special recognition by conservation organizations and state and federal government agencies.

And today, our mining engineers are working in many parts of the world – from Argentina to Uzbekistan – to help others establish similar programs for reclamation, conservation and habitat preservation.

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Cover illustration by William Brown

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Letters

Mormonizing?

I was disappointed with Stephanie Mencimer's article criticizing the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah ("Theocracy in America," April 2000). Even as a non-Mormon who has spent only a week in Utah, I found numerous inaccuracies in her critique.

The use of the word "Gentile" to mean "non-Mormon" has been gradually declining among Mormons for years; the Church itself discourages it, and non-Mormons are now just non-members. The Mountain Meadows Massacre happened in 1857, not 1848. Young Mormon missionaries are certainly not required "to get married within six months of their return, and produce a baby within a year after that." Many may do that, but that's not much different from the Baptists I grew up with in rural North Carolina, who often got married and had babies right out of high school. (The only difference is that the Mormon grooms are two years older and have some worldly experience under their belts.) Also, young Mormon males aren't even required to become missionaries—there is a lot of pressure for them serve on a mission, and most faithful ones do, but many do not.

Recruitment of Mormons by the CIA (for which Mencimer provides no statistics) probably has more to do with the language skills and the familiarity with foreign cultures that they pick up as missionaries than with any spying on members done by the LDS Church (which Mencimer also does not document). Her references to Mormon history, such as attributing polygamy solely to Joseph Smith's lust and mocking the literary quality of the Book of Mormon, are only repeats of the oldest and crudest attacks by anti-Mormons. Mencimer ignores the extensive work of modern historians and scholars of religion, both Mormon and non-Mormon, who have attempted to treat Mormonism with the same respect and seriousness as any other world religion.

There are, no doubt, many things to criticize about the conduct of the Church in Utah, but Mencimer details few incidents besides the most obvious that have been picked up by the mass media. Other than that, she repeats the standard negative stereotypes about Mormons being priggish, a cult, etc., and spends most of her time criticizing them on the grounds that she simply felt uncomfortable living among them—which is nothing more than classic prejudice.

SAMUEL BELL
Raleigh, NC.

Down 'n' Out in Ogden

What an excellent article! Stephanie Mencimer's "Theocracy in America" perfectly articulated what it is like to grow up and live as a non-Mormon in Utah. My hope is that people around the country—outside the state of Utah or those who aren't aware of how insidious the Mormon church can be—will take this article seriously and not think that Ms. Mencimer is just someone with a chip on her shoulder. Often when I try to describe the theocratic and downright unconstitutional situation in Utah to someone outside of the state, they think I am being mean-spirited or even paranoid. I am really happy to see this article of complete accuracy appear in a national publication. I hope supporters of getting more "religion in public life," including President Bush, will reconsider the ramifications of government faith-based initiatives.

JENEAN LINDLEY
Bountiful, Utah

Incoming!

Thanks, Mr. Webb for "The Myth of Military Poverty " (April 2001). It's nice to know that my fiscal status after nearly 18 years in the Army is completely my fault. It makes complete sense now: My paycheck is only supposed to be "pocket money," and the real compensation is in the hundreds of special payments, allowances, and benefits I get. (Although, according to you, I wouldn't recognize them if they reached down from my wallet and scratched my rear end.)

In principle I agree that some of our young soldiers are living (and procreating) beyond their means, but don't insult me by implying that my pay is good if you add up the bennies. How about slicing your pay in half in exchange for those bennies? Those bennies include, by the way, a move every few years, so forget building 15 years of equity in your home. You'll rent, either at significant out-of-pocket expense or in really lousy apartments, or live in those nice 40-year-old on-post apartments the Army doesn't have the money to fix. And tell your spouse her career will never take off since she has to leave her job every two years to go with you. Or perhaps she'll decide to stay in America with the kids while you're in Korea or Turkey this Christmas. Then she can buy jewelry and clothes at the PX at a fraction of retail cost, usually the same fraction as a decent sale or shopper's warehouse her civilian girlfriends shop at. And by the way, most of our "special pays" involve doing something nobody in their right mind would do, like defusing bombs, risking being shot, and jumping from airplanes. Or they're for jobs that you'd get paid a hell of a lot more to do as a civilian, like flying planes or translating Arabic. You should know better, Mister I-was-in-the-Coast-Guard. So don't tell me I need a class on how to live within my means. I do. I pay my family's bills; I fix my own 15-year-old car; and I put food on the table. If I were working somewhere else, I'd have a lot more left over.

TOM ADAMS
SERGEANT 1ST CLASS, US ARMY
Ft. Meade, Md.

More Myth-Making

While I agree with the main idea of Andrew Webb's article, "The Myth of Military Poverty," I wonder where he researched his facts. First of all, the military does not offer $100,000 of free life insurance. If this is true, it is a fact that they are keeping from every military member who sees the

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money come out of his paycheck each month. Second of all, Mr. Webb stated that the military pays a soldier with a large family more than a soldier with a small family. This is absolutely untrue. The pay rate for BAH (Basic Allowance for Housing) with dependents is exactly the same, whether it is for a civilian spouse only or a civilian spouse with seven kids. The concept of "the larger the family is, the larger the income" is a farce. Besides these two flaws, I think Webb has a good argument. The military does encourage marriage and it is certainly not the military's fault that many soldiers have poor fiscal management.

SPC KIMBERLY THOMAS
Ft. Gordon, Ga.

Andrew Webb replies:
SPC Thomas is correct: I said group life insurance available to military personnel is free. I was wrong: It's merely dirt cheap compared with that available to civilians. However, nowhere did I write that the compensation for personnel with large families is greater than that for those with small families or that basic allowance for housing increases as one acquires dependents. As for SFC Adams's comments, I can't begin to address them all in the space allotted. Suffice it to say, he didn't read the article carefully. For example, the reference to "pocket money" was about the military before 1973. The main point of the article was—and still is—that military personnel receive overall compensation on par with, if not better than, that of their civilian counterparts. However, because the military compensation system is so complex, servicemembers, military lobbyists, and members of Congress believe military personnel are grossly underpaid.

Show Me The Moolah

This responds to the article by Ted Halstead and Michael Lind, "Taking Charge" (April 2001). The authors offer the big lie that school funding can be equalized with a "slight " reduction in spending on affluent students. The same F-33 database they used is available to anyone on the Internet from the Census Bureau Web site (http://www.census.gov/govs/www/school.html). Using the most recent data available (1997), and excluding the few extreme statistical anomalies, the 1st percentile per-student revenue is $4,683 and the 99th percentile is $22,995. The national average (what all students would get under a national funding equalization scheme) is $6,742. This is not a "slight" hit for an affluent district: For a very rich district, this is a 75-percent reduction! By the same token, to bring everyone's schools to this level, one would have to more than triple school taxes. Put another way, the $2,059 boon for the 1st - percentile districts costs the 99th-percentile districts $16,253. The hit starts to be visible at the 55th percentile; a 60th-percentile school district (revenue = $7,033/student) would take a 4.2-percent reduction, and increasingly affluent districts would take increasingly large hits under the authors' scheme. A 75th-percentile district (revenue = $8,136/student), for example, would take a 17-percent hit; a 95th percentile district (revenue = $12,717/student) would take a 47-percent hit, reducing their districts' per-student revenues by almost half. In brief, the authors offer a "beast of burden" paradigm for educational funding, with the upper middle class selected as the beasts of burden.

JOEL S. DAVIS
Albuquerque, NM

Michael Lind and Ted Halstead reply:
In defending traditional school funding systems biased in favor of the wealthy, Joel S. Davis manipulates both numbers and words. To find a substantial "hit" on taxpayers, he has to go all the way out to the 95th percentile (the 17 percent "hit" for districts in the 75th percentile fits our definition of a slight reduction). Those whom Davis describes as "the upper middle class" are more accurately called "the rich." The rich pay taxes for other vital public services with the understanding that the beneficiaries will not be limited to members of their own social class in their own exclusive neighborhoods. Why should education be an exception?

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Monolingualism at the CIA • The Hazards of E-mail • Rove's Jag
Spy Planes Off Catalina • Changing the Guard

THE GOOD NEWS ON THE CELL phone front: I rode on two Amtrak Metroliners last month and each had a quiet car in which cell phones were banned. The bad news is a doctor in Hong Kong recently had a nice chat on his cell phone about buying a BMW while operating on a patient's colon. The next day, according to the *Boston Globe*'s Hong Kong correspondent, the patient was rushed back to the hospital with a punctured colon. The Hong Kong Medical Society, acting in the great tradition of physician licensing boards, declined to discipline the doctor involved. It did say that it "does not accept the use of mobile telephones during an operation or procedure without due justification." The inescapable conclusion is that the medical society deems getting a good deal on a BMW a "due justification." How can a misplaced slice here and there on a patient compare with shaving a thousand or two off the price of a car?

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MUCH OF THE PRODUCTIVITY gain of recent years has been attributed to the computer, but we can't help suspecting that the gain will disappear if the use of e-mail continues to increase. A recent Gartner survey showed 56 percent of respondents saying they had used e-mail more at work this year than last. The average increase in usage is 38 percent. "It's getting worse," Gartner research director Neil McDonald tells Tim Lemke of *The Washington Times*, "and it's going to continue to get worse." A lot of employees who seem to be working diligently at their computer stations are actually chatting with friends or reading and forwarding jokes and chain letters. And we haven't even mentioned computer games, with which more than a few employees become obsessed. Will fun and games doom the computer revolution?

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IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE Senate Democrats made a whopper of a mistake when they agreed early on to a $1.2 trillion tax cut instead of the $1.6 trillion that Bush wanted. They set the floor too high. They knew the House would give him $1.6 trillion and they would have to go to a conference committee. They would have to compromise, as indeed they did, ending up around $1.35 trillion which they know is too high a figure to leave enough money after the cuts to pay for even the education programs we need, much less deal effectively with all the other problems this country faces.

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I DELIGHT IN FINDING ARTICLES that have somehow gotten past the conservative editors of *The Washington Times* even though the stories suggest that Bill Clinton did something right or George Bush did something wrong. (For those of you who live outside the *Times'* circulation area, I offer the following four-column headline from its front page to suggest its unique approach to objective journalism: "Charming Bush Lauded After 100 Days.") So you can imagine how pleased I am by a recent piece in the *Times* suggesting both that Clinton was right to institute his COPS program to put 100,000 new community-oriented police on the streets and that Bush is wrong to propose cutting it. Here's a quote to give you the flavor: "Law enforcement officials said COPS had been a boon for area departments, with grants from the program used to hire or redeploy more than 5,400 police officers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District." A specific example of what the program means comes from Alexandria, where 14 new officers were added and the crime rate dropped more than 30 percent.

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IN CASE YOU'VE BEEN PERSUADED by recent reports suggesting that Florida voters really intended to elect Bush, consider this just in from the *Palm Beach Post*: 5,330 ballots were thrown out because they were punched for both Gore and Buchanan, but only 1,131 because they were for Bush and Buchanan.

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AS A GENERAL RULE OF WHITE House history, it can be said that the most sought-after office space in the building has been on the first floor, because that's where the president is. But arguably the two most powerful members of the Bush team, Karl Rove and Karen Hughes, have chosen offices on the second floor. You'll also notice that in White House meetings, Rove is rarely shown at front and center, but usually out

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of the way, a little off to the side. I like both his choice of offices and where he sits in meetings. The only disquieting news is that he's traded in what he described as the beat-up heap he drove in Texas for a metallic-blue Jaguar. That's not the custom with the wilier Washingtonians I've known. They didn't drive cars that drew attention to themselves. Even when the car was expensive, the color was subdued.

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ONE OF THE CONTINUING scandals of the federal government over the lifetime of this magazine has been the failure of its agencies to hire or train their employees for linguistic competence. Time after time, we learn of an embassy or CIA station with only a handful—and sometimes less than that—of local-language speakers. Today, according to *The New York Times*, "roughly half of the State Department's postings are filled by people lacking the necessary language skills." And now we find that that poor missionary's wife and baby were slaughtered because the CIA contractor employee in the spotter plane couldn't speak Spanish well enough to communicate with the Peruvian who, thinking the missionary's plane was running drugs, ordered it shot down. And this was not an isolated case. A former CIA pilot told *The Washington Post*, "This is one of the fallacies of the whole program: the language barrier." Ironically, one of the arguments long used to justify agencies contracting out government functions is that the government can obtain special competencies not possessed by its regular staff. So if the United States was going to hire a private contractor to perform the sensitive function of helping Peruvians determine what planes to shoot down, wouldn't it have made sense to insist that the contractor's employees speak the language of the Peruvians?

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DURING MY CHILDHOOD, moonshining was a main source of income for the residents of the hills and hollows of West Virginia and Kentucky. Now it has been replaced by marijuana. Marijuana is West Virginia's largest cash crop according to the *Charleston Gazette*, which adds that the 38,000 plants confiscated by the authorities are "nowhere near" the 436,673 seized in Kentucky. Figures are not available for Tennessee. But that is another state in whose rural areas respect for law is tempered by a high regard for the illicit dollar, and it is also said to be in the big leagues of marijuana cultivation.

The U.S. Navy should not be Carnival Cruises.

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BURIED IN A LONG *Washington Post* article about the Bush White House staff was this little ray of hope for the Democrats. It seems that the growth of minority voters is "putting Republican states such as Florida, Nevada, Missouri, and Colorado within the Democrat's grasp and is placing swing states such as New Jersey, Delaware, and Michigan out of the Republicans' reach." The White House figures that if minorities vote in 2004 in the same percentages they voted Democratic in 2000, their growing number will mean a Democratic voting margin of 3.5 million votes.

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THE NAVY SEEMS TO HAVE swept the Greeneville disaster under the rug by compelling the retirement of Cmdr. Scott Waddle. It shouldn't be allowed to get away with that. It is not changing the policy of encouraging civilians to go to sea on Navy ships, even though that policy was responsible for the sinking of the Japanese trawler. We now know that the Greeneville wouldn't even have gone to sea that day if it hadn't been to entertain its civilian guests. If the Navy wants civilians to visit ships, allow them to do so when the ships are in port, not when they're on duty at sea, where the needs and activities of the civilians could affect operational decisions. The U.S. Navy should not be Carnival Cruises.

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WHEN FUNDS ARE authorized, appropriated, or otherwise earmarked for a laudable government program, reporters and other observers often turn their attention elsewhere, assuming the good deed has been done. This is a mistake. Often the money is not spent wisely. Sometimes it is only partially used or not used at all. That is why it is important to follow the money and see if the intended good deed actually gets done.

This is what Somiri Segupta of *The New York Times* did with New York State's funds that were available to help welfare recipients as they struggle to enter the world of work. The reporter found out that only $12.5 million of the $66 million available to help drug addicts kick the habit had been used, as was the case with only $2 million of the $53 million available to help welfare recipients get from homes that are often in the inner city to jobs that are often in the suburbs. It is enough to make you weep.

Transportation and addiction are the most familiar obstacles to making welfare reform work. Truly concerned bureaucrats would have been eager to make the fullest use of every last dollar. What was their excuse? The fed-

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eral government, they complained, hadn't told them how they could spend the money until April 1999. That was two years and two months ago. What have they been doing in the meantime?

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HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF Chinese planes were buzzing around Catalina or Nantucket on spy missions? I haven't seen the slightest sign that anyone in our foreign-policy establishment is asking that question in attempting to understand the Chinese reaction to Hainan. Empathy for the other side, asking how we would feel in their shoes, is one of the keys to avoiding war. Just read Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August* to see how failures of empathy contributed to the horrible slaughter during WW I. And remember that it was John and Robert Kennedy's empathy for Khrushchev's problem with our missiles on his Turkish border that helped resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis peacefully.

If the U.S. is going to hire a private contractor to perform the sensitive function of helping Peruvians determine what planes to shoot down, wouldn't it have made sense to insist that the contractor's employees speak the language of the Peruvians?

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AS SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE heard, the May issue was my last as editor of this magazine. I'll continue writing this column, but the rest of the pages will be in the good hands of Paul Glastris. Paul was a much-loved and respected intern and editor here during the 1980s, then went to *U.S. News & World Report*, where he served as Chicago and Berlin correspondent and worked in Washington with other *Monthly* alumni, including James Fallows, Timothy Noah, Matthew Cooper, and Steven Waldman. Then he joined the Clinton White House speech writing team with Michael Waldman who, of course, is another former *Monthly* intern. So Paul is no stranger. He will keep alive the best of the *Monthly*'s traditions as he places his own unique imprint on its content.

I was once asked what my last words would be as I departed this life. I needed only a second to say, there would be just one word—"Thanks." That surely applies to how I feel now—immense gratitude to the scores of bright young people who have worked so hard here for far too little pay and who have gone on to careers that make me even prouder of them. And gratitude to our readers, who have been so loyal and so helpful—sending us everything from article ideas to clippings that provided items for this column and "Tidbits and Outrages" to those wonderfully absurd "Memos of the Month."

For the next issue, I promise "Tilting" will return to its usual policy of avoiding long items. But I would like to devote the rest of this column to reflections on what we've tried to do over the last 32-plus years.

The *Monthly* was in many ways a part of larger social movements and of trends in other magazines that were started in the latter half of the 1960s. Neoconservatives used *The Public Interest* to question liberal orthodoxy with research from the social sciences. *The New York Review of Books* became a platform for provocative analysis and opinion from the left. And *New York* magazine used "the new journalism" with its reliance on interview and observation to give life and color to the bare bones of just-the-facts reporting.

These influences were evident in the *Monthly*. We tried to offer provocative analysis and opinion but we based it not only on the library, but also on interview and observation. Because our main subject, government, could be heavy going for many readers, we were especially determined to bring the liveliness and fun of the new journalism to our pages. And perhaps a bit more than these other publications, we sought not only to describe problems but also to find solutions for them.

When we started, our immodest purpose was to show the rest of the press how to cover government. Our original staff all came from the Peace Corps, where we thought we had developed ways of getting a clearer picture than outside reporters of what was going right and wrong in a government agency.

Our guiding principles were two. First, talk to the people who really know what is going on, usually the middle- and lower-level staff who are either at the point where the rubber meets the road or closer to it than the big shots and p.r. people too many reporters of that era relied on. Second, examine the culture of the agency to determine the institutional pressures that cause good or bad results in the field. An example in the case of the Peace Corps was the pressure to get large numbers of volunteers overseas quickly, which often meant undertrained young men and women were sent to jobs that didn't exist.

The first principle was not original with us although, alas, far too few reporters seemed devot-

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ed to its practice. The second principle was original. Back then, only a handful of anthropologists applied the concept of culture to modern organizations, and it was almost totally novel to journalism.

In our first issue, we had articles examining the culture of Congress ("What Happens to a Senator's Day," by James Boyd), of the bureaucracy ("The Special Assistant," by Russell Baker and myself), and of the press ("Political Reporters in Presidential Politics," by David Broder). Including the press was the first step in our rapid realization that the pressures that operated inside government were often influenced by outside organizations. So quickly we began to look at lobbyists and the organizations that hired them. And, of course, we soon saw that the values of people in government were determined by the values of the broader culture. Within little more than a year, we found ourselves participating in the sexual revolution as we attacked the cult of masculinity and the role it played in bad decisions in Vietnam. And, as early as the second issue, we had begun our assault on the smug complacencies of our new ruling class, the meritocratic elite, with "Diplomacism: How We Zone People," by David Hapgood. (That assault was continued over the years, most notably in articles by Nicholas Lemann, culminating in his recent book, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy.*)

The impact of the broader culture on government became even more troubling when the idealism of the '60s was replaced by the selfishness of the Me decade and the orgy of greed that followed in the '80s and '90s. Perhaps our most spectacular failure as a magazine was our inability, despite constant attempts, to inspire a rebirth of the kind of idealism that had been such a vital force for good in the '30s and '60s. Cynicism has become a far more powerful force than idealism in recent years. But I remain hopeful that good journalism of the kind the *Monthly* has tried to inspire, exemplified most recently in the portraits of welfare reform by Jason DeParle and Katherine Boo, will ultimately lead to a new kind of realistic idealism, one that does not gild lilies but faces the toughest problems confronting the attainment of our goals of liberty, justice, and a fair chance for all.

I was once asked what my last words would be as I departed this life. I needed only a second to say, there would be just one word—"Thanks."

Realistic idealism is another way of saying neoliberalism, the political philosophy developed by this magazine. In some ways, that philosophy has triumphed. Our aim of getting liberals to accept the good ideas of conservatives has been achieved. In the early '70s, far too many liberals were too soft on violent crime and welfare cheats, and were automatically anti-military, anti-business, and anti-religion. Today, few are guilty of any of these attitudes. But neoliberalism had one other hope. It was that, as we accepted what was good about conservativism, conservatism would accept what was good about liberalism. But as the 1980s turned into the 1990s, conservatives became more stridently self-righteous. It's hard to find the compassion in George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism, and can you imagine Tom DeLay ever using the word except scornfully?

So in reaction, there's been less neo and more liberalism in the *Monthly* in the last decade as we have fought for health and education programs that will work for everyone and as we have taken on the know-nothings on the right who seem to oppose all government except the military and the police. Bill Clinton seemed to have turned the tide against those conservatives after the government shut-down in 1995, reminding millions of Americans that they need government.

But make no mistake: The right-wingers may sound a tad more reasonable but they are still up to no good. Now, their technique is to starve agencies by cutting taxes and underfunding them. Just last month we pointed out how the Food and Drug Administration needs not less, but more money to protect us. Poor schools need immense sums to have a fair chance when they are held accountable by George Bush. Billions more are needed for health care and infrastructure—from runways to roads to mass transit right down to the sewers under the street.

What I fear is that liberals are too fat and happy to do more than just say the right things and introduce the right bills, without the fire and determination to get them passed. To derail the DeLays, we need the passion of the 1930s and the 1960s. One thing I do know is that Paul Glastris will bring that passion to the pages of *The Washington Monthly*, which is why I believe, and know you will soon join me in believing, that Paul is the right person to entrust with this magazine's future. ●

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The Summer of '61

It all began in the summer of '61, when the first Peace Corps volunteers left home for their assignments in Africa, Latin America, India and Pakistan on what has become one of the great American success stories of all time.

Like most successes, it began midst controversy. It was harshly denounced by the Soviet Union as yet another capitalist plot, and by some of the American media and politicians as a Democratic plot. Host countries were often wary. And there was that embarrassing postcard from one of the earliest volunteers in Nigeria who did not expect her innocent appraisal of local conditions to be read by prying officials and turned into an international cause célèbré. Young Americans, doing their best to be helpful in difficult circumstances, learned quickly about local sensitivities. The Peace Corps was an education. And still is.

Today, forty summers later, more than 7,000 volunteers are serving in 78 countries, from Armenia to Zimbabwe. Altogether, more than 160,000 volunteers have served in some 135 countries. The Peace Corps continues to inspire, to publicly affirm the better angels of the American spirit, to generate deep friendships and lasting loyalties. And yes, it remains a remarkable living legacy of a still mourned President.

One of those early volunteers is now a senior partner with our firm. His specialty is agriculture. He spent two years living with villagers in the Punjab province of India, helping them improve their crops through the miracle of the "green revolution" introduced by the great American agronomist Norman Borlaug. He saw India transformed from a desperate importer of wheat and other grains to become a net exporter. He became a believer in what is now termed biotechnology.

At the end of his service in the Punjab, he began his journey home on an ancient British motorcycle which, with the help of a series of makeshift repairs by friendly tribesmen along the way, took him through the mountains of Pakistan's storied Khyber Pass and along the Kabul River valley of Afghanistan to that nation's capital, where the motorcycle finally expired but our Peace Corps volunteer remained, teaching English to Afghan children while saving up for the final leg of his journey home.

He will tell you that the Peace Corps was not only a great experience, but left him with a lasting admiration and love for the villagers of the Punjab, the Pakistani tribesmen who saved his life by performing miracles on his Royal Enfied, the fiercely independent people of Afghanistan. A true education in world affairs, in agricultural science, in what Carl Sandburg called "The family of man."

After returning home, Peace Corps volunteer Chris Klose became a reporter, a White House speechwriter, and an association executive. At John Adams Associates, he has worked to help stem the epidemic of malaria in developing countries. And he has continued to encourage new agricultural technologies that will help feed tomorrow's children. He has been there. He knows the issues. He helps define who we are.

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Monkey Do

Bush's White House is repeating the Clinton administration's biggest mistake.

By Bruce Reed

If there's a single principle that motivates George W. Bush, it's that he's no Bill Clinton. As a candidate, Bush didn't find his voice until a McCain commercial in the South Carolina primary compared him to Clinton. He closed every stump speech with a pledge to restore honor and dignity to the Oval Office, raising his hand more in 18 months on the campaign trail than he must have in 18 years of school. Every move Bush has made as president—from working banker's hours to shunning the bully pulpit—seems carefully choreographed to show that the era of Bill Clinton is over.

Yet for those of us who served in the early Clinton White House, the little ways the Bush administration has tried so hard to look different are less striking than the one big way it looks familiar. A Southern governor with lots of charm but an uncertain mandate wins the presidency by promising to take his party in a new direction. Then his administration spends its first months doing everything in its power to assure his party he didn't mean it.

The Bush White House, justifiably proud of its discipline, no doubt considers it a victory to get this far without a scandal like Travelgate, a distraction like gays in the military, or a domestic crisis like Waco. Though Bush lost one cabinet nominee over a domestic worker whose papers weren't in order, Clinton lost two.

But what nearly killed the Clinton administration in the cradle was not indiscipline and inexperience (although we had plenty of both). On the contrary, what hurt us most was that we did everything the voices of experience in Washington advised. We rushed bills that couldn't pass but congressional Democrats wanted, such as the economic "stimulus package" which gave obstructionist Republicans their first victory. We delayed bills like campaign-finance reform and welfare reform, which Clinton had promised to pass but Hill leaders didn't want. Instead of setting out to command a broad bipartisan majority across the country, we settled for a narrow, shrinking majority of our own Democratic ranks. The American people, who had hoped for better, took us to the woodshed in the 1994 elections.

One might have expected George W. Bush, whose political career got off the ground in the 1994 election, to recall that object lesson. After all, not even the Supreme Court could have elected Bush president if he hadn't run as a different kind of Republican out to change the tone in Washington.

Alas, it seems that some things never change. If the Bush team was ever sincere about putting country before party, it didn't take long to revert to form. On the defining issues so far—tax cuts, the budget, the environment, campaign reform—the man who promised to "trust the people" has deferred to his partisan base in Washington every time. Even as Bush has labored mightily not to make any of Clinton's early mistakes, he may be making the most important one of all.

Why don't new administrations know what's good for them? What kind of pressure could take an administration from promising to "leave no child behind" one day to easing arsenic standards the next?

Bruce Reed, *formerly Bill Clinton's domestic policy adviser, is now president of the Democratic Leadership Council.*

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Well, they don't call it a presidential transition for nothing.

As I watch this new administration hatch, I feel some sympathy for the Bush team. Through eight years of ups and downs, I loved every day I spent in the Clinton-Gore White House. But I loved those first 100 the least.

Nonetheless, I see the Bush administration sliding down a familiar slope that, if not reversed, could have dire consequences for them and for the country. We learned our lesson and found our bearings, and so can they. But so far, this White House seems more proud than worried about its course.

What follows is a cautionary tale of the lessons new administrations learn too late, and ignore to their peril.

Man of the House

Early in an administration, the party in power thinks it is the center of the universe, let alone the country. In the glow of victory, every idea suddenly looks like a winner, every dream within reach. From the think tanks around town, wonks who have toiled for decades in darkness emerge to spread the dust of ancient policy schemes through administrations.

After 12 years in the wilderness, the early days of the Clinton administration were a mad land rush for Democrats. Clinton signed five executive orders on abortion *in his first day*. The economic stimulus package was prepared in such a hurry that agencies didn't have time to design a targeted plan to create jobs, so they simply accelerated funding of their favorite spending programs. "I was appalled by some of the stuff in there," Clinton said, after even Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WVa.), who knows a little about pork, complained to the president about handouts in the package.

The first months of a new administration are a constant tug of war for the heart and soul of the president. Every issue straddled during the campaign that has to be settled, every key post to be filled, and every scrap of ungrabbed bureaucratic turf can tip the balance.

In 1993, campaign aides who had helped Bill Clinton and Al Gore get elected watched in dismay as non-believers from interest groups and the Hill got the jobs they wanted. "I knew campaign experience would be important," said one unemployed friend who had knocked on doors for Clinton in New Hampshire. "I just didn't know it would be the Dukakis campaign."

Clinton had headquartered his campaign in Little Rock so it wouldn't become a prisoner of Beltway thinking. But his White House had no place to hide. Congressional staffers who had openly scorned Clinton in the primaries used their bosses to foist them on the new administration. Capitol Hill insiders like George Stephanopoulos built empires of political appointees whose loyalty would not be to the president or vice president, but to the person who got them in the door. Once inside, the underlings built little empires of their own.

The first imperative for these little emperors was to close ranks against campaign veterans and true believers, whose insurgent ideas and longer ties with Clinton threatened the new arrivals' power. John Kroger spent a year as the campaign's deputy policy director and most persistent New Democrat, in charge of saying no whenever interest groups demanded promises Clinton couldn't keep. After Clinton won, the people Kroger had said no to managed to blackball him from the White House. He ended up in a remote corner of Treasury, lost interest, and left for law school.

Bill Clinton was as frustrated as the rest of us. He couldn't understand why so few people around him understood what he wanted to accomplish, or why so many people he had appointed to agencies dragged their heels. When the personnel office recommended someone on the grounds that he had been "a delegate at the '92 convention," Clinton wrote back, "For whom?"

Often, when Clinton bucked the party consensus, he couldn't get his own staff to go along. We soon learned that winning the president's support for an idea was only 10 percent of the battle, because others were determined to change his mind—or worse, to move their policies without him altogether. In 1993, Michael Waldman, who spearheaded the White House efforts on political reform, and I found ourselves at war over lobbying reform with congressional liaison Howard Paster. The president had publicly praised the Senate for voting overwhelmingly to limit gifts to members of Congress. But Paster refused to let us describe that as the official administration position. "That may be the president's personal view, but the decision should be left to members of Congress," Paster said. At one low moment, Waldman and I found ourselves drafting a memo to the president asking him whether his public support for a gift ban meant his administration was for it.

Throughout the agencies, appointees who weren't comfortable with the direction of Clinton's campaign set out to undo some of the promises that helped

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elect him. Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen and Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director Alice Rivlin successfully argued not to fund welfare reform in Clinton's first budget, virtually dooming any chance of passing a welfare bill before the 1994 elections.

Even Sen. Moynihan (D-NY), our most persistent Democratic critic, felt our pain. "I understand. I once worked in an administration," he told me in a welfare reform meeting on our 100th day. "The president is for it, but his government isn't."

On my wall in the Old Executive Office Building, I kept a giant poster of Clinton's campaign promises. After yet another news report about White House waffling, a colleague saw the list and said, "It looks like the portrait of Dorian Gray."

Bush approached the tax cut the way James Baker approached the Florida recount: Why look for common ground if there's a chance to win a one-vote majority?

Now it's Bush's turn. As a candidate, Bush ran as a new kind of Republican, a "reformer" who would seek bipartisan solutions and not be afraid to break with his own party. Those of us working on the other side tried to point out that Bush's supposed moderation was more rhetorical than substantive. But our case was undermined by the fact that Bush did make a few campaign promises that sounded genuinely new for a Republican, such as his pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Once in office, however, the skin-deep nature of Bush's moderation became apparent. His administration has caved in to the Washington pressures of partisanship and special-interest pleading even faster and with greater damage than Clinton's. When Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman had the temerity to suggest Bush would honor his pledge on carbon dioxide, the administration did cartwheels to get out of it. Bush said that he was changing his mind because of "important new information," which turned out to be a report by far-right former Rep. David McIntosh warning of big costs to business.

For good measure, Bush announced that the United States would walk away from the Kyoto protocol on global warming. Then Vice President Cheney stepped forward with the administration's preferred response to global warming: nuclear power. No one should be surprised that an administration headed by two former oil industry executives wants to ignore global warming. But it's a testament to the power of party interests that they would fess up to it before Earth Day.

Most reform-minded Republicans supported John McCain in the primaries and haven't been welcome in Bush country since. Instead, Bush has filled the ranks of the White House Counsel's office and the Justice Department with members of the Federalist Society, the network of conservative lawyers who brought us the Paula Jones lawsuit, the Starr investigation, and the tone Bush promised to change in Washington. Genuine New Republicans, like Bush's chief speechwriter, Michael Gerson, must wonder how long compassionate conservatism can survive the very people it was designed to make America forget. Indeed, for those who hoped that Bush would switch from aggression to appeasement after Florida, the Ashcroft nomination felt like Munich.

In Clinton's White House, most staffers were young enough to be Donald Rumsfeld's grandchildren. I felt like an elder statesman at age 33. In one of many White House shuffles, Chief of Staff Mack McLarty put one deputy in charge of long-term planning and the other in charge of short-term planning, but no one could remember which was which.

The Bush White House is boot camp by comparison. I chuckled when one of Andrew Card's first acts as chief of staff was to ban jeans in the Oval Office, a far bigger sacrifice for Bush's Austin crowd than it would have been for us. We could have scored cheap PR points, too, if we had banned jogging shorts in public.

But such discipline can be fertile ground for zeal. The same pent-up hunger that made Republicans determined to win the election at all costs makes it harder for them to put off any part of their agenda. And the same House staffers who stormed the can-

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vassing board to stop the recount in Miami-Dade are now storming into the administration.

The rational approach for a president who came in second in the popular vote and faced an evenly divided Senate would have been to reach across party lines and make the modest concessions needed to secure a broad bipartisan win early. That's how the Bush administration has handled education reform, negotiating directly with Senate Democrats and Republicans. But education is the exception. Look at how he has approached his top priority, a $1.6 trillion tax cut. Surely the Bush team knew that most Americans wanted a smaller tax cut, that most Democrats would embrace a sizable one, and that holding out for $1.6 trillion only ensured that anything less would be seen as a partial defeat.

How could an administration go from promising to "leave no child behind" one day to easing arsenic standards the next? They don't call it a presidential transition for nothing.

But Bush approached the tax cut the way James Baker approached the Florida recount: Why look for common ground if there's a chance to win a one-vote majority?

One scene in March captured what's wrong with the Bush strategy. The Republican leadership had just rammed the Bush tax cut through the House on a party-line vote, deeply alienating moderate and conservative Democrats who would have been eager to sign onto a substantial compromise. Bush staged a conference call, with Reps. Dennis Hastert, Dick Armey, and Tom DeLay, from Fargo, N.D. where he was campaigning to pressure two Democratic senators to support the tax cut. "I'm glad we moved it the way we did," Bush said.

A year earlier, as a candidate, Bush had shrewdly distanced himself from House Republican leaders, winning headlines for criticizing cuts in the Earned Income Tax Credit. Now, as president, he was not only high-fiving those same Republican leaders for what they had done, but taking credit for the partisan way in which they had done it.

That scene got scant press attention, but it stuck in my mind because I had seen its like before. In the 1992 campaign, no voter could confuse Bill Clinton and the Democratic Congress. "No more midnight pay raises. No more bounced checks," he said the month he announced his candidacy. "Service in Congress is privilege enough." A decade of partisan bickering had soured the country on Washington. Clinton pledged to move beyond "the brain-dead politics of both parties" and challenged Congress that "responsibility is for everybody, and it begins here in the nation's capital." The American people agreed, and gave the two reform-minded candidates—Clinton and Perot—62 percent of the vote on Election Day.

Yet two weeks later, Clinton found himself meeting with Sen. George Mitchell and Speaker Tom Foley at the governor's mansion in Little Rock, letting them talk him out of insisting they cut their staffs or change the way they do business. The native guides Clinton had hired to show him the ways of Washington, including George Stephanopoulos and congressional liaison Howard Paster, wanted him to have better relations with Capitol Hill than Jimmy Carter. Instead, he got headlines like one in the *The Wall Street Journal*: "Clinton Bends Under Pressure from Congress."

The scene repeated itself, like "Groundhog Day," throughout our first two years in office. In December 1993, Foley warned the president not to press welfare reform until after health care. In early 1994, the leadership pleaded with the president not to make the House rush to pass a comprehensive crime bill.

In a particularly revealing moment—appropriately, on Groundhog Day in 1993—Foley warned the president not to pursue both campaign-finance reform and lobbying reform. "Members will think you're out to take away their current livelihoods and their future livelihoods in one fell swoop," he said.

In each case, the leadership's advice was heartfelt, well meaning, an accurate reflection of the Democratic caucus—and the wrong course for the president.

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The new president and the congressional leadership liked and needed one another. On some issues, they made remarkable progress together, including the centrist, landmark economic plan they enacted in 1993 without a single Republican vote. But Clinton and Democratic leaders also learned the hard way that, although their fortunes were linked, their interests were not always the same. Halfway through his term, Clinton complained that he felt lashed to Congress "like Ahab to Moby Dick, with the same results."

Whatever You Want, Trent

What Clinton learned, and Bush needs to, is that the president's job is to lead the country, not to lead his party in Congress. Time and again in those first two years, we made our case to the center of the Democratic caucus instead of the broad center of the country—which, as we found out, was in a much different place. Bush seems to have the same flaw in his compass. Karl Rove, Bush's political mastermind, told Dana Milbank of *The Washington Post* that any strategy that's good for the Republican Party is good for the country. "They're the same thing," Rove said.

If anything, the famed Bush discipline may make it harder to get the Republican Party back in synch with the country. Take the president's new commission on Social Security. On the surface, the commission appears to be bipartisan, with seven members from each party and former Sen. Moynihan as co-chair. But on the central issue that divides Democrats and Republicans, partially privatizing Social Security, all 16 members of the commission were hand-picked because they already agree with Bush. Press secretary Ari Fleischer said the commission will "of course be comprised of people who share the president's view that personal retirement accounts are the way to save Social Security."

The White House no doubt hopes a stacked commission will give Bush bipartisan cover. But trying to impose a consensus where none exists will only make enacting reform harder. As Moynihan himself said during the debate on Clinton's health plan, it's impossible to make basic changes in the nation's safety net without broad majorities from both parties.

There are some signs the Bush team is learning. After weeks of rubber-stamping industry requests to overturn Clinton administration stands against global warming, arsenic in drinking water, and ergonomic workplace injuries, the Bush White House finally slowed down after and decided that one rule could stand: Yes, the government could test for salmonella in school lunches. Now the Bush administration is careful to review and delay key rules rather than reverse them. Perhaps they've learned their lesson, or perhaps they're just holding off on special-interest favors for now to show business what life will be like if Congress passes a ban on soft money.

But wishful thinking is always the last to go. I remember some senior White House aides still arguing for delaying welfare reform in November 1994, just days before we lost the Congress.

Going Native

The real test for any young administration is not how it starts, but where it's headed. To his everlasting credit, Clinton was never afraid to take on the tough battles. His administration struggled early in part because he refused to duck the hardest issues—reducing a record budget deficit, striving to provide access to health care for all, confronting the gun lobby and some in his party to pass a sweeping crime bill. He made sure we learned from our mistakes: it's hard to name a president who pulled off a more dramatic mid-term recovery.

So far, Bush has reaped the benefit of low expectations, but like his father, he may pay a price for low ambitions. If Clinton hadn't stepped up to lead his party instead of please it, he would have had far less to show for his years in office—and fewer years. He challenged and eventually transformed Democratic orthodoxy on deficit reduction, crime, accountability in schools, and welfare reform.

For all his talk of reform, Bush seems utterly unwilling to take on the conservative blind spots of his party. He just wants to spruce up the party image. Bush was able to get elected—just barely—by suggesting that the Republican Party was no longer against education, immigrants, or reaching out to minorities. In contrast to his party's real reformer, John McCain, Bush has never challenged Republicans' deepest self-delusions on campaign reform, guns, or supply-side economics.

In the end, that could prove to be the greatest mistake Bush is making: He can't change the tone in Washington if he's not willing to change his party. He went native a long time ago.

Of course, as we found out, the American people have a way of making sure their leaders learn these lessons, one way or another. Once again, the bar is lower for Bush: We managed to lose 53 House seats in the 1994 elections. He need only lose half a dozen seats to lose the Congress.

But Bush should take heart: I hear Dick Morris is still available. ●

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The Baby Boycott

Conservatives thought that if they only made it harder for mothers to work, women would stay home. Instead, women stopped having kids.

BY STEPHANIE MENCIMER

REMEMBER THE BAD OLD DAYS when Congress and the White House were at war over the Family and Medical Leave Act? It seems like ancient history now, that day in 1990 when George Bush vetoed the bill, arguing that business couldn't possibly afford to allow workers 12 weeks of unpaid leave after the birth of a child or to care for aging parents. The family leave act was a critical piece of legislation for women, 50 percent of whom were already in the workforce. Federal law had barred pregnancy discrimination, but it didn't mean much if women could still be fired or forced to quit after actually giving birth. But during the debate, Bush's press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, neatly summed up the Republican approach to dealing with such touchy work and family problems. If your job didn't offer maternity leave or let you attend to your dying mother, the solution was simple: "Look for other jobs," Fitzwater said.

The family leave act would languish another three years, as conservatives and right-wing pro-family groups argued that it would only encourage more women to abandon their God-given roles as mothers and seek the monetary rewards of the workplace. Opponents characterized the bill as an attempt by women to have their pursuit of pin money subsidized by the taxpayer. Rep. John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) dubbed the act "another example of yuppie empowerment."

In 1993, 10 years after the bill was originally introduced, Bill Clinton made it the first piece of legislation he signed as president. Since then, 20 million Americans have taken advantage of the law, and the economy, far from being dragged down, experienced the largest boom in U.S. history. Yet the family leave act was the first and last successful attempt in the past decade to drag this country into the modern era where the majority of women are in the paid workforce.

Nearly every national initiative since then has been met with similar resistance, as conservatives have both refused to pay for measures that might ease the strain of working families and insisted that any efforts that "encouraged" women with children to work were detrimental to the traditional family. As Richard Lowry explained last month in the conservative *National Review*, "Working moms are at the center of a variety of cultural ills."

But if conservatives had hoped that withholding public support for working mothers would bring back June Cleaver, they were badly mistaken. Instead, a growing number of American women have found another way around the problem: They've stopped having children.

Between 1976 and 1998, the number of women between the ages of 40 and 44 who were childless doubled. Now, 20 percent of baby boomer women are childless and likely to remain so, and demographers predict that as much as a quarter of American women born between 1956 and 1972 will never have children. The numbers go up with education and income levels; fully one-third of women in their late

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30's with graduate degrees have no children. Meanwhile, the number of women with only one child has doubled since 1976, to 18 percent, and the Brady Bunch has gone on the endangered species list. In 1976, a whopping 36 percent of all women had a brood of four or more kids. Today, that number has shrunk to less than 10 percent, according to U.S. Census data.

For all the prosperity of the last eight years, a significant percentage of women of all races and ethnic backgrounds are behaving as if the country were in the midst of a famine. In fact, the birth rates among native-born women are lower today than they were during the Great Depression. Many things can reduce the birth rate, including lower child mortality, greater educational opportunities for women, escalating costs of raising children, urbanization, and lower levels of religiousness. These factors help explain much of the birth rate decline that took place in the early part of the 20th century, when lots of people were getting off the farm and no longer needed 10 kids to help out, and Progressive-Era reforms outlawed child labor.

But none of this answers why, today, 40 percent of American women are sharply curtailing or abandoning motherhood altogether. Various other explanations have been trotted out in a string of recent books on the subject: the desire for "freedom," baby-boomer self-absorption, new lifestyle choices, and infertility. In typically American fashion, the trend has even been dubbed a "movement," which now has its own "child-free" lobbying groups that are demanding such things as kid-free zones in restaurants and workplace accommodations such as paid leave usually reserved for parents.

But the idea that mass childlessness is the product of a "lifestyle choice" or a political movement defies common sense. We are, after all, highly evolved primates. Reproductive instincts are hard wired in our brains, and historically, only events of serious magnitude—wars, depressions, famine, and seismic shifts in the economic system, such as the industrial revolution—have caused large numbers of women to forgo having children. When resources are scarce, and when they don't have much help, women will postpone motherhood. And despite the romantic myth of the self-sacrificing mother, if given the option, most women will choose to advance their own position before bearing more children. That's because in the long run, a woman's improved status benefits her children. It's a pattern replicated all over the natural world, and has been for thousands of years.

Our failure to recognize this pattern—and the systemic changes manifested as individual decisions—has serious implications for the future. Many people will argue that a lower birth rate is a good thing for an overpopulated planet—and they will be right, up to a point. It's the forces driving widespread childlessness that should concern us. America's disappearing children are the canaries in our coal mines, a warning that our social and economic system is seriously out of whack.

Induced Labor

Today's childless revolution, as writer Madelyn Cain has dubbed it in her recent book on the subject, isn't really much of a revolution. Birth rates have swung wildly over the past century, and the dips always prompt some political turmoil, if not cultural upheaval and increased attention to women's reproductive decisions. In the early 1900s, birth rates plummeted from four kids per woman in 1900 to 2.2 during the Great Depression, a trend that spawned the American eugenics movement, as it coincided with massive waves of immigration. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt declared that Americans were committing "race suicide," because women were refusing to do their duty to have children. The famous British economist Alfred Marshall blamed declining birth rates partly on the "selfish desire among women to resemble men," and helpfully suggested that a "national protest against the restriction of births from selfish motives" might help.

The percentage of childless women today is about as high as it was during the 1920s, and the percentage of women stopping with just one kid is actually much, much higher now (as are our immigration levels). Thankfully, talk of eugenics has not resurfaced in a decade or more, since conservative Ben Wattenberg wrote *The Birth Dearth* in 1987. In his book, Wattenberg had raised concerns about the declining birth rates among white middle-class folks and the rapidly increasing ones among poor Hispanic immigrants. He was promptly branded a racist.

Today, we talk about the childless in the casual way we once discussed swingers, as just another group exercising one of the many lifestyle options available in this country. If the discussion of birth rates lacks drama, that's largely because the U.S. is not facing huge population declines like most of Europe and East Asia, where birth rates have fallen precipitously.

Immigration has helped maintain the overall U.S. birth rate, as have high rates of poverty. America's poor have scandalously high rates of infant and child mortality unseen anywhere else in the developed world. (Foreign-born Hispanic women are averaging

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slightly more than three kids apiece, which has stabilized the national birth rate at an average of about two births per woman.) These factors serve to mask underlying population trends that aren't so different from those abroad.

Fortunately, researchers have come a long way since Alfred Marshall and have identified some common factors among the countries with the lowest birth rates, which are evident in the U.S. as well—and they have little to do with selfish women or emerging lifestyle choices. It turns out that the developed countries with the lowest fertility rates happen to be those with social and economic structures still organized around the patriarchal "male breadwinner model," which is designed to force women out of the workforce once they have children.

The leading thinkers on this subject, from French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais to American MacArthur genius and feminist economist Nancy Folbre, have made a provocative case that when women have wide opportunities in the workplace that are severely curtailed by having children, the birth rate will fall to very low levels.

It's not such a radical idea when you think about it. Looking back to Teddy Roosevelt's day, women's rights had moved to the top of the reform agenda, and lots of upper-class women leading the charge understood that it would have been nearly impossible to combine work with raising children under the male-dominated system of the time. Like women today, lots of them chose work over children. The difference now is that many more women have that option.

If you're skeptical that institutionalized sexism can depress the birth rate, just look at Japan, which has been suffering for years from what American University law professor Joan Williams, director of its gender, family and work program, calls the "rent-strike solution" to sex discrimination. Japan has one of the developed world's most chauvinistic societies. It didn't pass its first equal-opportunity law until 1985, and even then, it only "requested" that employers "make efforts" not to discriminate. Japan did not officially outlaw sex discrimination until 1999.

Japanese women quickly disappear from the workplace after having children. It's not hard to see why. Along with a dearth of child-care facilities and a corporate culture that demands horrendously long hours, Japanese men have shown little interest in helping out around the house. Japanese government studies show that Japanese men contribute a scant 17 minutes a day caring for their children, compared with their wives' two hours and 39 minutes.

While rigidly traditional family roles have endured for married women, the market has opened up to offer single women much broader opportunities. Consequently, Japanese women have created an entire new class known as "parasite singles," who have scandalized Japanese society by working, shopping a lot, living at home, and eschewing marriage. Seventeen percent of Japanese women in their early thirties are still unmarried—mostly, they say, because they can't find men who are willing to share the domestic load.

Avoidance of marriage is the primary factor depressing Japan's birth rate, according to Japanese demographer Miho Iwasawa, who presented a paper on the subject at an international population conference in Tokyo this past March. Japan's fertility rate has fallen to 1.3 births per woman, and in Tokyo, the most child-unfriendly place in the country, the fertility rate has dropped to just 1.1. (And you can't blame the drop on contraception; the Pill wasn't legalized in Japan until just last year.)

These low fertility rates are causing widespread fear that the country will be unable to support its vast elderly population without drastic measures either to increase immigration or to raise the birth rate. But so far, Japanese leaders have taken only small steps towards making childrearing more sustainable. (A few years ago, after discovering that education and birth rates in women were inversely related, one Japanese legislator suggested that the country simply stop sending women to college.)

Much of Europe and East Asia are in the same boat as Japan. Germany, Spain and Hong Kong have even lower total fertility rates, with a mere 1.2 babies per woman. Italy comes in close with 1.3. All these countries have arrangements that make it much harder for mothers to work than in Nordic countries and France, countries where fertility rates have not fallen to precariously low levels.

Ironically, the Australian demographer Peter McDonald has found that countries that claim to treasure family values most are the ones still pursuing the policies that lead millions of women to abandon motherhood altogether. These policies include tax systems that penalize the earnings of a second worker in a married couple—better known in the United States as the marriage penalty—lack of part-time work, child care, paid parental leave, the persistence of short school days that don't mirror the work day, and the use of tax credits rather than provision of actual services to ease the strain of parenthood.

"High levels of equity for women as individuals in

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combination with continuing low levels of equity for women as wives or mothers means that many women will achieve lower fertility than they aspired to when they were younger," writes McDonald.

Reality Bites

Where does the U.S. stack up in this picture? Largely stuck in the 1950s. While American feminists have made tremendous strides towards achieving equality in the workplace and in higher education, they've made little progress changing underlying social and economic institutions. Everything from the tax code to the school day is still based on the male-breadwinner model, despite a workforce that hasn't looked like Ward Cleaver's in 20 years. And American politics is still heavily influenced by a political movement that idealizes the male-headed nuclear family. (Remember the Promise Keepers?)

Countries that claim to treasure family values most are the ones pursuing the policies that lead women to abandon motherhood altogether.

Perhaps someone should write a reality-TV sequel to "Leave it to Beaver." In it, we would learn that June had actually gone to Vassar and now works as a graphic artist. In our show, June struggles valiantly to hold down a full-time job, partly because it's deeply satisfying but also because she knows that staying in the workforce is essential to her—and the kids'—long-term financial well-being. This being reality TV, she doesn't get much assistance at home from Ward. (Recent studies show that even in the rare case where a woman is the primary breadwinner, she still does 13 hours a week more domestic work than her husband does.) So June skimps on sleep, rising at 4:30 every morning to squeeze in some work, make a casserole for dinner, fold laundry, and then rush the kids off to preschool before going to work.

As our series progresses, June's situation actually gets worse once her kids hit elementary school (she has the misfortune of living in Texas, which until recently didn't even provide universal kindergarten—something still unavailable for 37 percent of American kids). She no longer has to pay for day care, but her days become completely unmanageable because the elementary school sets her kids loose at 3:15 every day, leaving them more than three hours to roam around, throw water balloons at cars, and prank-call the neighbors.

Of course, the Beve wants to play the clarinet and Wally has swim team, but those activities take place at opposite ends of town (tight school budgets eliminated music and sports years ago). The Cleavers live in the suburbs, so there's not so much as a sidewalk, much less a bus that would safely get the kids to swim practice and back home. Naturally, Ward, with his bigger salary, doesn't volunteer to spend his afternoons behind the wheel like some low-rent hacker. Hiring a driver is out of the question; too bourgeois, and June worries that something would go wrong. Plus, the cost would finish off whatever money was left in her paycheck after being taxed at Ward's higher rate by the marriage penalty.

June asks her boss if she might be able to work part time, but he says no, thinking he had been generous in giving her maternity leave when he didn't have to. So June decides the kids would be better off—and Ward thinks it will be cheaper—if she simply quits her job and gives up her dreams of advancing up the corporate ladder. Wally and the Beve now have the best-educated chauffeur in town, and with June at home, Ward starts asking her to do extra chores like taking his clothes to the cleaners and buying birthday presents for his mom. What's June going to do, say no? (Research dating back to the 1960s shows that women without their own income have very little bargaining power inside the home, which is why researchers believe that in families with children, men still don't do much on the domestic front.)

Later in this sequel, Ward decides his stay-at-home wife has gotten dull and depressed—not to mention fat from all those hours behind the wheel—and he runs off with his personal trainer. With a ridiculously low child-support award and no alimony, June moves the kids into a two-bedroom apartment and starts job-hunting. She's been out of the

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workforce for a decade, and not only are her skills out of date, but she's lost most of her professional contacts. She starts her career all over again—at 50.

June and the kids scrape by until the finale, which features an elderly June getting a notice from the Social Security administration that basically tells her she would have been better off if she had just killed Ward in his sleep than sign the divorce papers. That's because when he left her, he also took her retirement plan. In exchange for raising Ward's kids, she gets almost nothing from Social Security, since she spent 15 years without contributing payroll taxes. (Social Security is only security for women lucky enough to have a good job for 40 years running or to be widowed by a man with one.) In the finale, when June complains about the injustice of it all, she'll be confronted by a childless friend who says without a shred of sympathy, "Well, that's what you get for choosing to have kids. What'd you expect?"

Considering the obstacles that working mothers face, it's no wonder so many women decide to keep their day jobs and just get a cat.

There's a good chance that a few seasons of Reality Beaver might depress the birth rate even further, and prompt boycotts of the show by the Christian Right, but it would illustrate pretty clearly the way our economic and social systems operate against women. As AU's Joan Williams says, women basically have two manageable choices: to give up kids or to give up the job. Since neither option is especially attractive, most women have muddled along on the "third path," trying to manage both.

But the third path is littered with casualties, which is why American college-educated women have one of the world's worst labor force participation rates. Only Turkey, Ireland, Switzerland and the Netherlands have lower proportions of female college graduates working for pay, according to writer Ann Crittenden in *The Price of Motherhood.* Forty percent of American college-educated women are not in the workforce, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

As our nouveau June Cleaver illustrates, it's no wonder so many women decide the easiest course is simply to keep their day jobs and get a cat. Yet they don't get off scott free either. Aside from any regret they may have over forgoing kids, childless professional women are frequently accused of selfishly ignoring their biological imperative in exchange for a new Lexus. But most people don't understand that the cost of having children is even higher for professional women than those with less lucrative careers.

Say you're a woman with a Ph.D., on the tenure track at a major university. If you have a child, and leave the workforce for five years until your kid goes to kindergarten, your career is basically shot. Tenure is an impossible dream. You will have done the equivalent of burning through your long-term investments on two weeks in Vegas. The hundreds of thousands of dollars that went into your education and career advancement will have been completely wasted. So here are your alternatives: Delay kids until you have tenure, when you've got more power to negotiate a better arrangement for yourself, or forget about the kids. And if tenure doesn't come until you're 42, good luck at the infertility clinic. (Incidentally, these are not tradeoffs that men are required to make. Crittenden cites a recent survey of MBA's that found that only 20 percent of the women had children compared to 70 percent of the men.)

The ambitious woman trading family for power isn't the portrait of the fastest- growing group of the country's childless, though. According to the Census Bureau, the largest increase in childlessness occurred among women without college degrees. While the percentage of childless women with college degrees rose from 25 percent in 1980 to 28.6 percent in 1998, the percentage of childless women with a high school diploma and some college jumped from 9.2 to 17.7 percent.

These women look a lot like my sister. She is 29, married for almost three years, and would very much like to have a baby but can't afford to. When she says she can't afford children, it's not because she wants to trade up for a nicer car first or that she's trying to make partner at Arnold & Porter. Her problem is more fundamental. Like most Americans, she does not have a college degree; and her long-time job as a travel agent doesn't pay very well. Nor does it offer even unpaid maternity leave.

Her situation is not unusual, as the Family and Medical Leave Act doesn't cover 43 percent of American workers, those who work in firms with fewer than 50 employees. Even if she did have unpaid leave,

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my sister couldn't afford to take it. Her husband, who never finished college, has a good job as an aerospace machinist, but the housing prices where they live have eaten up a huge chunk of their joint income. Moving away is not an option, because my brother-in-law has benefits at his job of 14 years that are increasingly in short supply for those without a college degree. Plus, moving in search of cheaper housing would cause them to lose the priceless benefit of living near my parents.

If her company would allow her to take unpaid maternity leave, my sister might be able to turn it into a MasterCard moment, but then, she also can't afford child care, which can run as much as $250 a week—more than 70 percent of her weekly pay after taxes. So for now, there will be no children. My sister and her husband are saving, and hoping that in two or three years, they might be able to afford the children they desperately want. Of course, the delay carries its own risk. The older my sister gets, the less chance she has of actually getting pregnant or of having more than one child. Her birth rate could be lowered whether she wants it to or not.

A Modest Proposal

The politics that help create this kind of forced childlessness—and the many unhappy casualties of the "third path"—are a huge negative force in this country. It surfaces in the polarized dialogue between stay-at-home moms and working mothers, and in the growing intolerance of children in public. And it's not a very efficient system. By requiring women to make impossible tradeoffs between work and children, our country shuts some of the most talented and (expensively) educated people out of the workforce, while simultaneously making it nearly impossible for them to dedicate some of their talents to raising the next generation.

If the ten-year saga of the family leave act is any indication, though, change isn't likely to come anytime soon. Bill Clinton took a stab at it shortly before leaving office, when he signed an order allowing states to use unemployment benefits to provide paid parental leave. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce promptly sued to block the implementation, leaving the U.S. to remain with Swaziland and Papua New Guinea as one of only a handful of countries that don't require paid maternity leave.

And don't expect the baby boomers to be leading the charge for universal preschool. They're too busy trying to figure out how to fix Social Security. Paying for the baby boomers' retirement, in fact, is likely to lower middle-class birth rates even further, as it will have to come out of the paychecks of younger workers and through cuts in what little services there are to help young families make ends meet. The cycle gets more vicious, as the growing childless population is becoming a formidable lobbying interest against the family-friendly policies they view as discriminatory.

Those like my sister, stuck in the middle, could try the Marlin Fitzwater approach, and instead of finding different jobs, they could find a different country. Sweden would be a good choice. In the early 1980s, the country was facing a labor shortage and declining fertility rates. Rather than try coercive measures to increase birth rates (like banning abortion or restricting women's educational options) or massive immigration, Sweden chose to make the workplace more accommodating for parents. Swedish women are now guaranteed a year of paid leave after having a baby, the right to work six-hour days with full benefits until their child is in grade school, and subsidized child care.

Sweden's birth rate went from 1.7 in 1980 to 1.9 by 1996, even as the rest of Europe's was declining. Women and children were the clear winners. In Sweden, college-educated women now have almost the same workforce participation rates as men and close parity in earnings, even as more women (and men!) stay home during their children's early years than in the U.S. But relocating to Sweden seems a little unworkable. So here's another solution to help speed change a bit: Let's make the baby boycott official.

If politicians want babies to kiss on the campaign trail, they're going to have to ante up, starting with part-time jobs with full benefits, tax equity, paid maternity leave, Social Security benefits for stay-at-home parents, and subsidized child-care centers—with well-paid teachers. Even more important, they'll have to finally admit that the minivan does not qualify as a child-care center, and make the school day match the work day—complete with PE, music, sports, and other enriching activities on site. (Think of the traffic jams that could be eliminated!) Men must sign binding contracts to start doing laundry, mastering the vacuum cleaner, and driving the carpool a few times a week. Then—and only then—should women agree to fire up the oven. After a few years without new life to inspire, project their expectations upon, and inherit their empires, men just might come around. And if they don't, childfree women will have plenty of time to take over the world and do the job for them. ●

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CRT INTRANET

Correspondence Stylistic Preferences For Attorney General John Ashcroft April 2001

1. Signature Plate:

Sincerely,

John Ashcroft
Attorney General

Note: There may be times when the Attorney General wishes the complimentary close of "Most sincerely," but if that is the case, the writer will be advised.

2. When using "Washington, D.C." *in the text of a letter*, please punctuate as in this example. If used as part of an address, no periods are needed (consistent with other state's addresses).

3. Try to avoid using the first person singular (I) when composing an official letter for the Attorney General's signature, especially in the first sentence of a letter.

> *As an example*, "It was good to hear from you." as opposed to "I was glad to hear from you."

4. Try to avoid use of the words "pride" or "proud" in correspondence. Alternative choices would be "pleased", "grateful" or "gratified."

> *As an example*, "It was gratifying to hear of the success that this program has brought to the community...."

5. Do not use the phrasing, "no higher calling than public service" in correspondence. An alternative would be, "Public service is a high calling...."

6. In doing personal notes, especially condolence letters to widows, appropriate protocol calls for the following inside address and salutation:

Mrs. John Smith
123 Main Street
Ordinary Town, NY 12345

Dear Mrs. Smith:

Note: This would not apply if the person does not share the same surname by choice as their spouse.

7. Refrain from flowery or excessive word choices especially in terms of adjectives. A letter itself from the Attorney General carries importance to any subject so effusive language is not necessary. Simple phrasing is the best choice.

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Oh. Canada.

Like the rest of us, Bush doesn't care about Canada. Big mistake.

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE UNITED States, Canadians frequently wind up feeling like Elizabeth Taylor's husbands: They have one humiliation after another heaped on them, they often learn about changes in their relationship through the media, yet they stand by their spouse in public. Though the two nations have deep cultural, economic, and political ties, the relationship is famously one-sided. Most Americans know virtually nothing about Canada, while many Canadian students know more about U.S. history than their American counterparts. U.S. presidents routinely mangle the names of Canadian leaders, while Canadian leaders constantly emphasize Washington and Ottawa's "special relationship."

Even within this tradition of U.S. neglect, President George W. Bush stands out for his obliviousness. A Texan and an aspiring Spanish-speaker obsessed with courting Latino voters, Bush has made opening markets southward his overriding foreign policy goal for the Western Hemisphere. He treats Canada, by far America's largest trading partner, as at best an afterthought. During the 2000 presidential campaign, a Canadian talk-show host jokingly informed Bush that he had been endorsed by Canada's leader, Prime Minister "Poutine" (not actually an official, but a Montreal 'delicacy' made of gravy, french fries, and cheese curds). Bush said he was delighted to have the support of "Prime Minister Poutine," unaware that the prime minister's real name is Chrétien, a Liberal who was all but stumping for Al Gore. The journalist's trick was not altogether fair; one can imagine other presidential candidates falling for it, though probably not Al Gore. But Bush's disregard for Canada is very real. In his major campaign speech on Western Hemisphere foreign policy, Bush devoted only three out of 76 paragraphs to Canada—the other 73 dealt with Latin America.

Every newly-elected president since Franklin Roosevelt has made Canada his first trip abroad. Bush blew off Canada and instead went to Mexico, where he visited that country's new president, fellow conservative and ranch owner Vincente Fox. Canada's political elite took this as a slap in the face. To meet Bush, Prime Minister Chrétien had to travel to Washington this February. After an Oval Office meeting, Chrétien was reportedly irritated at having to explain to Bush the basic facts of key trade disputes between their two countries. In April, Bush finally got around to visiting Canada, but only to attend the Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec City, where the main agenda item was—you guessed it—opening Latin American markets. During the summit, Bush read dutifully from prepared remarks extolling the deep and enduring ties between the U.S. and Canada. Then he called Chrétien "amigo."

Bush's casual disregard of Canada may seem like an extreme but harmless expression of a longstanding American tradition. In fact, it is foolhardy, for him and for the country. In a way that hasn't been true for years, Canada matters. The Bush administration might not know it yet, but to fulfill its agenda on everything from trade to energy to national defense, the United States, the modern equivalent of classical Rome, needs support from the land of hockey, cheese fries, and Alanis Morrissette. And at this rate, the United States won't get it.

Gas Masks and Anarchy

In December 1999, an Algerian man, Ahmed Rassam, was caught crossing from British Columbia into the state of Washington carrying one hundred pounds of potent explosives. U.S. investigators announced that

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Rassam, who was living in Montreal and may have been linked to Osama bin Laden, was part of a plot to blow up Seattle's New Year's 2000 celebration.

That Rassam had set up shop in Canada was no fluke. According to Canadian intelligence services, Canada now is home to the most terrorist groups in the world, a frightening statistic given that Canada has less than one-eighth the population of the United States. The possibility that one of these heavily armed and highly trained terrorists will cross the long, largely unprotected U.S-Canada border and wreak havoc in the States is very real.

The possibility that heavily armed and highly trained terrorists will cross the long, largely unprotected U.S-Canada border and wreak havoc in the United States is very real.

The Canadian side is particularly easy to slip past, since Canadian customs officers, police, and anti-terrorist services lack the technology and training necessary to identify and capture sophisticated armed militants. They also seem to lack the will. When I arrived at the Montreal airport last month from Washington, D.C., the customs officer looked at my passport, which displays a large stamp showing that it's outdated (there is a renewal stamp in the back, but the officer didn't look at that). Even though I was on my way to a major trade summit involving the leaders of 34 nations, including President Bush, she paid no heed to the literally hundreds of foreign stamps in my passport, several of which are from countries with active terrorist movements. When she initiated a cursory check of my bags, the first two things she found were a makeshift gas mask and leaflets from a radical Montreal-based anarchist group. Apparently, even a device used to protect oneself from deadly chemicals and literature from one of Canada's most notorious militant outfits weren't enough to rouse her suspicion. "Have a nice trip," she said, waving me through.

Terrorists know that they have it good in Canada and that the border is vulnerable. According to intelligence sources, numerous terrorist groups seeking to infiltrate the United States have set up shop in Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, and other large, multicultural Canadian cities. "Canada has become a haven and a jumping-off point for terrorists with America in their bombsights," writes Ben Wattenberg, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

In addition to weak border controls, Canadian laws on fund raising have made it easy for terrorist groups based in Canadian cities to obtain capital; fraudulent Canadian passports are simple to acquire; and the country's social welfare programs are so lenient that some alleged terrorists have even started drawing government checks. Although Rassam arrived at the Montreal airport in early 1999 carrying a false French passport, he was still allowed into the country. Eleven days later, Rassam was receiving Canadian welfare benefits. Despite U.S. warnings that a bin Laden cell was operating in Montreal, Canadian anti-terrorism forces conducted only a cursory investigation of the city and later destroyed the wiretap tapes they had made of Rassam's outfit, infuriating U.S. intelligence and ultimately making it much harder for U.S. prosecutors to build a convincing case. When told the tapes had been destroyed, the judge presiding over Rassam's trial said: "I am very troubled that the tape recordings don't exist anymore ... Apparently, this is the Canadian way of doing things."

The threat of terrorists crossing into the United States from Canada is only going to get more pronounced. As North and South American countries negotiate a free trade agreement, it will become even easier to move people and goods throughout the hemisphere—a terrorist's or mobster's dream. Accordingly, Canada and the United States need to formulate a coherent, workable joint anti-terrorism strategy within the next year, well before a hemispheric free trade agreement comes into effect. Such a strategy should include better coordination among U.S. and Canadian intelligence services, funding to train Canadian border police and upgrade their anti-terrorism technology, and a heightened emphasis on interdiction of chemical and biological weapons. The two states also need to expand the Lacolle Project, a binational effort to stop human smuggling—including the smuggling of criminals—into Canada. Without Canadian-U.S. partnership on combating terrorism, Washington will have no hope of preventing dangerous militants from entering the States.

Oil Slips

Although President Bush's pronouncements that

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the United States is in the midst of a serious energy crisis are a bit hyperbolic, it is clear that United States' domestic natural-gas production is declining and that the American economy is becoming increasingly reliant on foreign oil. While Washington plans to address this energy shortfall by boosting domestic fossil fuel exploration, it also must import vastly more energy from close political allies like Canada. In fact, in the near future, Canada will be a linchpin of Bush's plans to reduce U.S. energy shortages.

Canada already is the United States' leading foreign supplier of natural gas and oil, and our northern neighbor is sitting on enormous reserves of potential energy. Canada's Energy Board believes that an area of Alberta province contains at least 300 million barrels of recoverable oil, an amount that exceeds the proven reserves of Saudi Arabia. What's more, Canada has several huge untapped oil and gas fields off its Atlantic coast. Yet a vast amount of these reserves remain untapped because of pressure by Canadian environmentalists and nationalists who don't want Ottawa to lose control of natural resources, conflicts between Canada's federal and provincial governments, and the previously high price of exploration in Alberta. Realizing that Canada is in a strong position due to America's energy shortages, before the Quebec summit Chrétien reportedly told members of his party that Bush better be careful dealing with Ottawa, or Canada will slap high taxes on oil and gas exports.

Even the United States' exploration of its own reserves is partially dependent on Canadian cooperation. The Bush administration has made exploration in protected areas of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) a central aspect of its energy plan. Although much has been made of the oil in ANWR, the real selling point of potential drilling in Alaska is the huge natural gas reserves under the state's North Slope. But unless Canada agrees to build a pipeline for North Slope gas through the Yukon or Northwest Territories, those reserves will remain in the ground.

Mashed Potatoes

The global trading regime is moving towards three discrete blocs. The European Union is removing barriers amongst its member-states and planning to incorporate the Central European and Baltic nations within the next decade. Meanwhile, the developed East Asian economies have initiated a system of currency swaps and are beginning to broach the idea of an Asian free-trade zone. To compete with these two blocs, Washington will have to negotiate a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), effectively extending the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) all the way to Chile. Recognizing the importance of an FTAA, President Bush has made it one of his priorities. The Americas must have a "common market so we can compete in the long term with the Far East and Europe," Bush said at the Quebec summit.

As the only other developed economy in the hemisphere, Canada must be on board for an FTAA to pass. For other nations in the hemisphere, Canada could be an example of the advantages of free trade. The enormous flow of goods and services across the 49th parallel—U.S-Canada trade has more than doubled since the two countries inked a free trade deal in 1999—might demonstrate to South American countries the potential of unrestricted access to the giant U.S. market.

In fact, Ottawa has significant clout with several South American nations that are not so excited about freer trade in the hemisphere. Some key South American states such as Brazil and Argentina, both of which have expressed serious reservations about an FTAA, see Canada as more cognizant of their needs. The South Americans may feel an affinity towards Canada because Ottawa shares some of South America's worries about FTAA rules on agriculture; or, they might feel more comfortable dealing with Canadians, because as a middle-level power, Canada does not inspire such reflexive alarms as the United States.

Yet, despite the fact that Washington needs Ottawa's help to get an FTAA passed, the United States continues to take nearly every opportunity to screw Canada. Last October, the United States invoked a ban on potatoes from Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), an eastern province of Canada, after a wart virus was found on one small batch of spuds, even though the virus was not harmful to humans. It was no coincidence that, at the time, Washington State and Idaho both had a surplus of potatoes. Like many issues involving Canada, the tater tussle was largely ignored by the U.S. media and general public after the ban was invoked, but the lack of export markets ruined thousands of P.E.I. farmers and plunged the province's government into a deep deficit. In response to the P.E.I. ban, Chretien teed off on Bush in private during a Liberal Party closed caucus, blasting the U.S. president for allowing the potato dispute to fester and questioning whether W. even knew where Prince Edward Island was. Then, at the Summit of the Americas, Chretien revealed that he had served

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Bush and the rest of the U.S. delegation dishes full of tasty Prince Edward Island spuds during several dinners. The two countries are still working out a solution to this particular trade war.

Meanwhile, Bush seems unlikely to win Canadians over with his anti-environmental stands. Canadian anti-globalizationists were among the first to demand that hemispheric free trade agreements include provisions on labor and environmental standards, demands that have been picked up by U.S. protestors. What's more, because Canada historically has been more committed to social welfare than the United States has, Canadian anti-globalization protests have resonated with a wider audience—and Bush has shown little inclination to find middle ground. Canadian anti-globalization (read: anti-United States) protestors who descended last month on Quebec City for the Summit of the Americas, a meeting of the leaders of every state in the hemisphere except Cuba, hung up signs that read "Starbucks=Murder," "Get Out American Morons," "Cuba is More Free than Washington," and, my favorite, "Bush Sucks at his Father's Teat" (a rough translation from the French).

54'40" Or Fight

When asked about America's northern neighbor, John F. Kennedy once said: "Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners and necessity has made us allies." These sentiments are still true today, and bilateral trade between the U.S. and Canada continues to grow exponentially. Yet the relationship between the two powers is slipping, and Canadians feel increasingly slighted by their powerful southern neighbor.

The new president can make a difference; his administration is full of policy-makers with Canadian experience, such as Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, and Trade Representative Robert Zoellick. By working closely with the Canadians to get an FTAA on track, maintain cordial relations with key South American nations, clamp down on terrorism and small-arms proliferation, and cooperate on energy, the Bush administration can help reverse the benign indifference creeping into bilateral relations. Hopefully, the Bushies will realize that the United States needs Canada. If they don't, it'll be a long four years for the Western Hemisphere. ●

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

APRIL 2001

WALTER ROBINSON AND MATT CARROLL

"Luxury by Design, Quality by Chance"

Boston Globe, April 29-May 2, 2001

Matt Carroll, Sacha Pfeiffer, Michael Rezendes, and Editor Walter V. Robinson

When the Globe *"Spotlight Team" investigated the questionable building practices of Toll Brothers, the 9th largest home builder in the country and a major presence in Massachusetts, they uncovered broken promises made to homebuyers about house features, building-code violations, shoddy construction, use of second-rate materials, and— despite guarantees to the contrary— utterly non-responsive customer service. The $1.8-billion-a-year company has also racked up $90,000 in court fines for repeatedly violating environmental codes. And, when ordered by the courts to buy back homes because of their construction flaws, Toll Brothers re-sold the same houses as top-quality properties to unsuspecting customers.*

But in an era when state and federal governments have all but dumped the responsibility of overseeing of the building industry on already overwhelmed local agencies, angry customers have little recourse. In many cases, binding arbitration clauses, embedded in housing contracts, prevent victims of fraud from having their days in court.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Or e-mail us at **editors@washingtonmonthly.com**. Nominations for stories run in May are due June 1, 2001.

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Black and Blue

Why does America's richest black suburb have some of the country's most brutal cops?

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

No one had to warn Prince Jones about the police department in Prince George's County. The cops in Maryland's second most populous county had a reputation for turning routine traffic stops into Rodney King incidents sans video camera. Jones had told friends about his fear of the P.G. County police, and, according to them, Jones had even been pulled over and searched for drugs once before by a P.G. cop (who found none).

Jones' fear of police didn't match his profile. He was a Howard University student, a father, and a man of faith who never hesitated to dispense a religious aphorism to friends. He was also a fitness freak and personal trainer at Bally's Total Fitness. After leaving Howard, Jones became engaged to the mother of his child and planned to join the Navy. The son of a radiologist, he could have been a poster boy for middle-class black America.

So for the past few months, Jones' family and friends have been asking how he ended up slumped over the steering wheel of his Jeep Cherokee, a few blocks from his fiancée's home in Virginia, with four bullets in his back courtesy of a P.G. County police officer.

The official police account is that the shooting was a surveillance operation gone bad. In the early morning of Sept. 1, thinking they were trailing a suspect in a theft of an officer's gun, undercover narcotics detective Carlton Jones (unrelated) and a superior trailed Jones 15 miles from P.G. County, where he lived, through Washington, D.C., and finally into Fairfax, Va., where the two officers separated. Both officers were in plain clothes and unmarked cars. As Carlton Jones tells the story, Prince Jones, apparently discovering he was being followed, rammed the detective's car three times, forcing the officer to open fire in fear for his life.

But for those close to Prince Jones, the police account is simply an attempt to cover up a cold-blooded murder. Though it is within protocol for police to operate outside of their jurisdiction, a mistaken identity shooting is not. Neither is claiming to be a cop while raising a gun without a badge, which Carlton Jones did by his own admission. Perhaps most troubling is the profile of the suspect police claimed to be looking for—a stocky, 5-foot-6-inch man with dreadlocks. Jones was 6-foot-4-inches and slender, sporting closely cropped hair.

In over 30 years as Commonwealth attorney for Fairfax County, Robert Horan had never charged a police officer with a crime. After investigating Jones' death, he declined to break with tradition. Jones' death, which is still under internal investigation by the Prince George's County Police Department, sparked a minor furor at Howard University. Students marched on the Justice Department to demand a federal investigation. The controversial shooting rang out nationally as Al Sharpton promised to lead a march on P.G. County. *The Washington Post* weighed in with an editorial asserting that "the ultimate wrong was done to an innocent man." Even presidential candidate Al Gore dedicated a moment of silence to Jones.

For those who'd followed the news in the county over the past few years, Jones' killing was only the latest in a string of suspicious shootings, murders, and beatings that had occurred at the hands of P.G. County police officers. Jones was the 12th person shot over a 14-month period in the county. Five of those 12 died. Two other men, who were not shot, died in police custody.

The violence perpetrated by the P.G. cops is a curious development. Usually, police brutality is framed as a racial issue: Rodney King suffering at the hands of a racist white Los Angeles Police Department or more recently, an unarmed Timothy Thomas, gunned down

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Ta-Nehisi Coates *writes frequently for* The Washington Monthly *on race and culture.*

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by a white Cincinnati cop. But in more and more communities, the police doing the brutalizing are African Americans, supervised by African-American police chiefs, and answerable to African-American mayors and city councils. In the case of P.G. County, the brutality is cast against the backdrop of black America's power base, the largest concentration of the black middle class in the country.

A bedroom community of the nation's capital, Prince George's county is the only suburban county ever to become richer as it became blacker. According to the Census Bureau, the county, which is 63 percent black, had a median income of $47,000 in 1997, more than double the median income for African Americans and almost $10,000 more than the median income for whites.

Like their white counterparts, affluent African-Americans will countenance a few police thrashings if that's the price of keeping their Jags from getting jacked.

Beyond economics, P.G. County's African-American residents boast a formidable amount of political power. The county executive, the state's attorney, and the chairman of the county council are all black, as are 41 percent of the police officers, including the one who killed Prince Jones. With political and economic clout have come all the trappings of opulence once denied African Americans. And in some ways, Prince George's shows integration taken to its most extreme, perhaps perverted, end—black people with the inalienable right to drive the same luxury cars, buy the same sprawling houses, and be just as apathetic as America's white elite.

Even with the death of Prince Jones, a native son of the black bourgeoisie, there has been very little outcry from the county's leadership. "I have yet to be contacted by any constituent who had anything to say about [Prince Jones' death]," County Councilmember Walter H. Maloney (D-Beltsville) told *The Washington Post* shortly after Jones' shooting.

Police brutality may help Al Sharpton garner a spot on "Rivera Live," but the black uppercrust sees little point in putting the police on trial here in Prince George's County, or anywhere else in the nation for that matter. Like their white counterparts, African-Americans will countenance a few police thrashings if that's the price of keeping their Jags from getting jacked.

Famous Blue Beatdowns

In the folklore of urban black communities, tragic encounters with the police assume mythic proportions. For Detroit, there's Malice Green; in New York there's Abner Louima. Jones is the closest P.G. County has to a police-brutality martyr. But even before his death, the county could boast a healthy cross-section of shootings, maimings, and thrashings that would easily make the Blue Beatdowns Hall of Fame.

Police department officials assert that much of the controversy is the result of media hype. They say complaints against the department hit a 16-year low in 2000. In that same year, the department had only five shootings, a figure which compares well with neighboring Montgomery County's five police shootings and Washington D.C.'s seven, and is a 15-year low for P.G. county.

Still, neither of its neighboring jurisdictions has strung together so many questionable incidents the way Prince George's County has in recent years. It's hard to ignore the stories of people like Elmer Clayton Newman, who died last year after suffering two cracked ribs and a broken neck while, or after, being arrested. The officers who took custody of Newman, who was high on cocaine at the time, claimed Newman injured himself by repeatedly banging his head into a wall. No officer was charged in the case.

There's also 19-year-old Gary Albert Hopkins Jr., an unarmed college student, who was shot in 1999 by Officer Brian C. Catlett at a fire station. The police contend that Hopkins was reaching for another officer's gun when Catlett fired to stop him. After eight witnesses testifying before a grand jury directly contradicted the police version, Catlett made history by becoming the first police officer ever indicted in the county. Yet the parade of witnesses was ultimately not enough—Catlett was acquitted in February of this year.

Or again, there's Freddie McCollum, who in 1997 was stomped, beaten, and had a police dog unleashed on him in his own home. McCollum lost his right eye as a result of the drubbing. Police claimed his injuries were the result of his tumbling eight feet with two officers when the floor collapsed. Only McCollum, however, was injured. A jury didn't buy that explanation, and

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McCollum won a $4 million judgement against the county.

This litany of brutalities reads like a Quentin Tarantino interpretation of the Keystone Kops. And despite the lack of criminal prosecutions of cops—P.G. County has never convicted a police officer in a brutality case—the county's dark comedy has cost its taxpayers plenty. As of the end of last year, the county had been hit for no less than $6 million in damages for police misconduct. The trend was serious enough to draw federal attention. In November, the Justice Department decided to investigate the police department for patterns of brutality and misconduct.

Despite trouble serious enough to bring in the Justice Department's big guns, the county elite has treated the issue with indifference. "I think a lot of the citizens would like to not have to come out and deal with this," says Edythe Flemings Hall, president of the local NAACP chapter. "Although it's very clear that there are people with great individual wealth, we aren't ready to marshal our social capital to get into a big dog fight. Many of those in Prince George's County really are living pretty comfortable."

Rich, Black, and Apathetic

When I came to Washington, D.C., to attend college, one of my first lessons came from a couple of local cats who warned me about the cops. They weren't talking about Washington's blue, but Prince George's County's. I was told that if I wanted to be famous, I should go to Prince George's County and run a few red lights.

The reputation of Prince George's cops has changed little over the past 20 years, even as the county's demographics have shifted dramatically. During the days when Prince George's County was lily-white and voted George Wallace for president, Prince George's cops were well known as thugs. "The force was known as a bunch of cowboys who rode roughshod over citizens," says the NAACP's Hall.

Commander, Bureau of Patrol Gerald M. Wilson asserts that the department has exorcised its old demons, but that years ago its reputation bordered on Third-World. "Basically my recollection is that people said 'PG cops, don't mess with them,'" recalls Wilson. "You wanted to avoid them at all costs. [If stopped] you would just stick your license through the window."

Perhaps the closest the county has come to community mobilization over police conduct was in the case of Terrance Johnson. In 1978, the 15-year-old Johnson and his older brother, Melvin, were taken into custody by Prince George's County police. At the station, Johnson alleged that he was beaten by a police officer, at which point he snatched the officer's gun and shot him and another officer as he attempted to flee.

Johnson did 17 years for murdering police officers James Brian Swart and Albert M. Claggett IV. The case polarized Prince George's black and white communities. In 1995, Johnson was paroled to much fanfare in the black community, which had sympathized with and even lionized him for defending himself against what they perceived as corrupt and brutal police. (The cheers fell silent when Johnson later shot himself after a failed robbery attempt in Hartford County, Md.)

In hindsight, the complexity of Johnson's case did not make him the best face for a campaign against police brutality. Perhaps this explains why the county's fledgling black bourgeoisie wanted little part of the controversy. The same year that Johnson killed two cops, the NAACP attempted to march on the county seat, claiming that they would draw 1,000 protesters. but gathered only 60, much to the dismay of then-chapter president Sylvester Vaughns. "Expecting a thousand people is not a hell of an objective," demurred Vaughns.

But apparently it is in Prince George's County, where at times the community seems to have felt more ire against the activists than the police. The county's NAACP has been the most consistent force in opposing police brutality, and yet it has frequently been dissed and dismissed as irrelevant. Some of this reflects broader problems for the organization on the national level, as well as internal strife within the local chapter. But a large part of it seemed to be that Prince George's black community was demonstrating the complexities of that very integration which the NAACP had for so long championed. As the community's affluence grew, its political agenda changed.

Prince George's County's black elite had for the most part attained their goals of becoming property owners with the same rights as all Americans. The fact that they were black was, at most, a minor inconvenience.

Black Power Outage

Prince George's County may have virtually no appetite for protest, but this isn't especially unusual among the nation's black elite. A few years ago, *The Washington Post* ran a Pulitzer-prize winning series which revealed that the District of Columbia's Metropolitan Police Department had shot more people than any other big-city department in the country.

In consequence, the police made substantive changes, with the help of the Justice Department. The

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city has implemented non-lethal-force technologies, such as pepper spray, which it says will help reduce the number of fatal interactions between police and community members.

The changes seem to have worked. Since these new strategies were implemented, shootings resulting in death or injuries have dropped by 78 percent over two years, according to the department, with the number of deaths dropping from 12 to one. The number of times officers have fired their weapons, either accidentally or intentionally, has declined by 48 percent. And the crime rate has not risen under this lighter touch.

The clear beneficiaries of these improvements were the city's black citizens—most of those shot had been black. But in a city where the mayor and much of the city council is black, and which houses one of the most storied enclaves of old black money, most of the outrage that helped spur these changes came from a small group of activists—not from political leadership. Even *The Washington Post* was surprised by the lack of letters to the editor. Of course the District is not unique in this regard.

In New York, too, the high-profile murder of Amadou Diallo and the subsequent acquittal of the officers involved has evoked little more than angry

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

Republicans are starting to whisper that Treasury Secretary **Paul O'Neill** might be on the way out in another year or so, perhaps to be replaced by **Larry Lindsey**, currently chairman of the National Economic Council. O'Neill has publicly expressed doubt that big tax cuts will stimulate the economy and forestall a recession. Lindsey, on the other hand, is an abiding believer in the gospel of supply-side economics.

Secretary of Defense **Donald Rumsfeld** has been known as a ruthlessly skilled bureaucrat since the Gerald Ford administration, when he killed off one of **Henry Kissinger**'s arms control treaties. But his management style seems to be rubbing people the wrong way these days. It was widely noted in the Pentagon, for instance, that when a Navy submarine commanded by **Scott Waddle** inadvertently sank a Japanese fishing vessel in February, Rumsfeld didn't go before the press to accept the tough questioning. When the White House and Capitol Hill reacted angrily to a Pentagon order halting all military-to-military contact with the Chinese, Rumsfeld again skirted blame and claimed his orders had been misinterpreted by **Christopher Williams**, the aide who wrote the memo.

His most damaging subterfuge has been keeping Congress uninformed about the progress of his "top-to-bottom" Pentagon strategy review. Senate Republicans, including Majority Leader **Trent Lott**, have shown their anger by stalling the confirmation of some of Rumsfeld's proposed aides.

It looks like former Congressman **James Rogan**, a House impeachment manager whom the DNC successfully targeted for defeat last year, has made a savvy career move. Rogan had been thinking of running for the seat that was expected to be vacated by his fellow California Republican, Rep. **Christopher Cox**, who was expecting to be nominated to the federal court of appeals. But Rogan foresaw that Cox's nomination would run into trouble because of fierce opposition from California's two Democratic Senators, **Dianne Feinstein** and **Barbara Boxer**. And indeed Cox's name was conspicuously absent from the list of 10 court nominees the White House announced in mid-May.

So instead Rogan has accepted an invitation by the Bush Administration to be Commerce Department undersecretary for patents and trademarks. It's a big job because the regulation of intellectual property is increasingly vital to high-growth sectors of the economy such as the biotechnology industry (see "Gene Blues" by **Nicholas Thompson** in our April 2001 issue). Also, a couple of years in that position and Rogan will be able to write his ticket on K Street.

Big time national Democrats have long understood that they don't have to spend time courting local Democratic leaders in the District of Columbia. District voters almost automatically support Democrats for president, and D.C. residents don't have voting representation in Congress. Why, then, was newly elected Democratic National Committee Chairman **Terry McAuliffe** eager to show up as the keynote speaker at the D.C. Democratic State Committee's recent **Kennedys-King** awards dinner? Two probable reasons. First, the DNC just launched its new Voting Rights Insti-

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rhetoric in the city's formidable black community. Beyond Sharpton's invective, black political, civic, and business leaders have not flexed their collective muscle, and there has been no change in the department's policies. In the Ramparts scandal in Los Angeles, it was not the fury of the community that put the police department under fire, but the sloppiness of some very crooked cops.

At those times when African Americans have loudly confronted the issue of police brutality, they have frequently turned it into an employment issue, singling out the lack of minorities within various police departments as the root of the problem, rather than the behavior of the officers overall. The hiring strategy is an outgrowth of old-school Civil Rights and Black Power movement logic, which argues that African Americans will be more sympathetic to issues facing minorities than whites in the same jobs will be. When applied to law enforcement, the logic seems especially potent, given the history of black America's interactions with the police. It was the fallout from the Rodney King explosion that produced Willie Williams, the first African-American police chief in the history of the LAPD.

By such logic, affluent, black Prince George's County should have virtually eradicated police brutality. But

tute in the wake of the Florida election debacle, and D.C. makes a good launch platform for talking about disenfranchised voters. Second, D.C.'s local Democratic establishment may have new clout thanks to **Al Gore**'s former campaign manager, **Donna Brazile**, whom the committee named "outstanding Democrat" of the year and who is contemplating a run for the D.C. city council.

Bill Clinton's White House operated on the theory that one of the best ways to forward the administration's agenda was for the president to speak publicly about big news events—from school shootings to rising fuel prices. The Bush White House, in contrast, prides itself on sticking to its planned message and not reacting to the news. The result, apparently, is less harried lives for Bush speechwriters. Last March, during the week the Dow plunged below 10,000, senior economic speechwriter **David Frum** wasattending a three-day conference at the Bacara Spa and Resort in Santa Barbara, CA, sponsored by *Talk* magazine and UBS Paine Webber. As the market crashed, Frum was seen walking the lobby in tennis whites with fellow attendees such as **Barbara Streisand** and Miramax chief **Harvey Weinstein**.

Seemingly completely tone-deaf to pop culture, **George W. Bush** has finally captured the public's imagination by organizing T-ball games for kids on the White House's south lawn. **Major Garrett** of CNN offered us an intriguing answer to why the events work so well. While "soccer moms" defined the Clinton era, "baseball dads" define the Bush era. Soccer is international; baseball is quintessentially American, though it includes Latin America—the W. world view. Soccer moms were all about work and family, the gender gap and the way we live now. Baseball dads are about nostalgia and getting back to the way we used to live. Soccer is chaotic and team oriented; every kid touches the ball. Baseball is individualistic, disciplined, leisurely, manly without being macho, a sport, unlike football, that is male but doesn't alienate women.

The key to passing any education bill in the Senate is winning the support of Sen. **Ted Kennedy**. The man credited with persuading Kennedy to back the Bush education plan is White House education adviser **Sandy Kress**. Part of the key to Kress' success, according to **Dana Milbank** of *The Washington Post*, is that he is a longstanding Democrat who still contributes to the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. It should be added that the blueprint of Bush's plan was a paper written in 1999 by another DLC member, **Andrew Rotherham**. Rotherham later became Bill Clinton's special assistant for education before returning to the Progressive Policy Institute, the DLC's think tank, and Sen. **Joe Lieberman** turned Rotherham's idea—fewer federal regulations in return for more accountability and money—into a bill. Kennedy, however, fought the bill, because it was opposed by liberal interest groups such as the teachers unions. Vice President Al Gore also shied away from adopting the plan, despite urgings from Lieberman. Bush then made the plan his own and ran on it. Here's the irony: Had Kennedy supported the plan two years ago the way he is now, George Bush might not be president.

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this presumption ignores many of the nuances of African-American identity. In black America, race and ethnicity don't trump other things like class, gender, or sexual orientation, arguably because black identity is not just seen as an object of pride, but still as an obstacle to be overcome.

Indeed, outside of Prince George's County, the fault lines in the "minority representation" argument are causing tremors where you'd least expect them—in minority communities. Already, many big cities are evicting the first wave of black mayors, for whom race was a campaign bonus, and replacing them with white ones. Ditto for law enforcement: Los Angeles still has a black police commissioner, Bernard Parks, yet the city is currently embroiled in one of the biggest corruption scandals in the department's history.

The diversity approach is not completely flawed. Police brutality is an issue fraught with racial implications, if only because most of the victims are black, and black officers on the street may mitigate racial tension. But diversity in police departments is not a cure-all for brutality as long as African-American officers are bred on the same stereotypes as their white colleagues. As Jesse Jackson has noted, little old white ladies aren't the only people clutching their pocketbooks at the approach of a group of black males.

"I get more requests for police support than I get complaints," says Rep. Albert Wynn. "I get far more inquiries about how we can get more police out on the streets. People are very concerned about police brutality, but they're also concerned about safe streets and that issue can't be lost."

The situation in P.G. County suggests that police brutality is not the product of racism alone. Police forces are paramilitary institutions which by their very nature are prone to abuse of power—the psychological dynamics so dramatically illustrated 20 years ago by Phillip Zimbardo of Stanford in his study of prisons. Using student volunteers, Zimbardo showed convincingly that ordinary people put in positions of authority within a criminal justice setting would behave brutally as a way of controlling others. It was the circumstances which brought out the worst in people, rather than specific defects in the individuals themselves. Abusiveness, in fact, seemed the default position.

That's why, argues Ronald Hampton, executive director of National Black Police Association, diversifying police departments like P.G. County's won't make them any less violent. "Not if we are going to send [black officers] through the same training academy that [white officers] have been going through all along. The policies and practices will change when the philosophy changes. Why do we think that if we hire more blacks and women, that if we send them to the same institution, that things will change?"

Of course, some in Prince George's may not have a problem with the current "philosophy," so long as it stays in the county's poorer areas, where affluent black residents are just as likely as white ones to think the victims of police brutality have it coming.

"We expect that African Americans in power will do something different, especially as it relates to lower-income black people," says Alvin Thornton, a professor of political science at Howard University and a resident of Prince George's County. "But the other part is that in many ways black people are no different than whites. There is a certain impatience with crime, and when police pounce on people there is some understanding."

Bad Odds

A few weeks after Prince Jones was killed, Howard University held a memorial. Those who spoke asked for God to fill their hearts with forgiveness for the officer who'd taken Jones' life. Friends of Jones spoke of his religious zeal and their deep belief that he was at Jesus' side. Several of them ended their eulogies in tears, as did university president Patrick Swygert, a man not known for public displays of emotion.

Perhaps the most poignant address came from Jones' mother, Mable Jones. While she sprinkled in a few words of rhetoric, Jones was much more concerned with the present than the afterlife. She asserted that her son's murder was a wake-up call. "It might be that God had a plan for me to move out of my comfortable suburban practice and speak out," she said, according to the *Washington City Paper*.

But her assertion stands in sharp contrast to the reality of Prince George's County, a place where no one is looking to be Al Sharpton. The truth is, the black middle class is not that much different from the white one. Just as affluent white people aren't too interested in the plight of poor whites, neither are affluent blacks especially concerned with their brothers in the ghetto—in fact, they may be even more eager to distance themselves from the ghetto than white people are trying to to distance themselves from the trailer park.

But as much as affluent blacks want to believe that money and power can insulate them from the effects of racism in this country, it is a delusion. White rich people might risk landing in a trailer park because of a bad turn of the economy, but the odds aren't nearly as high as those of a black middle-class man becoming the victim of police brutality, as Prince Jones so terribly discovered. ●

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The Body Politic

Jesse Ventura sure can talk. If only he could govern.

BY LYNDA MCDONNELL

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE ABOUT JESSE Ventura's life? The former wrestler overcame a lack of money and party structure to snatch 37 percent of the vote and win a three-way race back in 1998. Now, Minnesota's big and blustery governor lives in a state-owned mansion with maid service and a good cook; is chauffeured and guarded at taxpayer expense; draws $120,000 a year at his day job; and earns multiples of that moonlighting as autobiographer, one-night wrestling referee, color commentator for the XFL, and national media darling.

Only last fall, America's foremost political mavericks, John McCain, Ralph Nader, and Pat Buchanan, came calling at the state capital to size up this phenomenon, perhaps hoping to absorb some of his magic or learn how to win voters with blunt talk. Even Al Gore cozied up to him. Ventura was the third-party candidate who won control of the ship of state and changed Minnesota's fortunes while handsomely boosting his own. Moreover, despite a softening economy and occasional bout of foot-in-mouth disease, Ventura is rich in popularity, the hard currency of democratic politics. Popularity can get a long shot elected, as with Ventura's upset victory in 1998, and it can also protect an embattled president, as with Bill Clinton. When asked a few months ago about his state approval rating, Ventura said "the number's 71 percent and I like it."

But having people like you isn't the same as being effective. Getting things done requires a vision, tenacity, and the ability to forge careful alliances, especially for a party of one, like Ventura. His record so far should give Jesse-wannabes pause and make the rest of us wonder whether a third-party politician, even one with Ventura's star power, can do much to move the electorate or the political status quo. Ventura may well run for reelection next year, but unless he learns to convert popularity into political muscle, he could be a political novelty item: the guy who discovered the value of public office for bolstering a waning entertainment career.

Playing Politics

Ventura isn't the first American celebrity to enter the ring of politics, of course. His career trajectory is faintly reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's. Like Reagan, the affable optimist, Ventura is an accomplished performer whose on-camera persona—the roughhousing truth-teller—engenders both bemusement and a deep trust among many voters. The difference is that Reagan came to the presidency with extensive political experience, a fully formed vision based on anti-communism and faith in free markets, and a sizeable party apparatus to help enact it. By contrast, Ventura's government experience was limited to a brief stint as mayor of a small Minneapolis suburb. He was elected on the slogans and cavils of a radio talk-show host—give back the surplus, don't tax my jet skis—and scant understanding of the nuances of government.

During his first legislative session in 1999, with the Republican House and Democratic Senate still stunned by his upset, Ventura pushed through a budget largely prepared by his predecessor, a moderate Republican who had not sought reelection. On his own initiative, Ventura focused attention on the need for improved mass transit in the sprawling, increasingly congested Twin Cities.

In the 2000 session, though, Ventura exposed his political inexperience by throwing his substantial political capital into a quixotic crusade for unicameralism, an issue that provoked about as much interest with voters as returning to the gold standard. Ventura traveled by bus in wide loops around the state, trying to incite the citizens to demand the chance to vote for a one-house legislature in place of the two-house arrangement that has prevailed since Minnesota earned statehood in 1858. The current

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arrangement struck him as redundant, and he hated conference committees between the two houses. Having small groups of legislators cut critical deals at late-night sessions struck him as suspicious, even anti-democratic.

Bands played in the small towns he visited. An admiring barber buffed his bald dome. Schoolchildren lined the streets, eager to see one of Minnesota's few true celebrities. But phones didn't ring back in the state capitol. The idea of a unicameral legislature was too obscure to capture public support; it couldn't even get a floor vote in the Senate. While the campaign for a single chamber didn't leave much of an impression on the voters, it had one significant result: It infuriated many of the legislators Ventura needed as allies to pass the rest of his agenda.

Asked last January about thousands of workers being laid off in the state's iron-ore mines, he responded, "Maybe I should go on Leno again."

Rather than trade horses or make amends, Ventura blasted lawmakers as "gutless cowards" (unrepentant legislators had buttons made) and pledged to get even. His political bark proved more menacing than his bite, however, and cynics at the capitol speculated that Ventura didn't care about a unicameral legislature; he merely wanted some issue with which to flog the legislature. His attempts at party-building have been no more effective. He stumped for 28 legislative candidates of the Independence Party of Minnesota, so named when Ventura clashed with the Perot faction of the national Reform Party and seceded. A few of the fledgling party's candidates took second in their races, but overall they averaged only 8 percent of the vote.

"Teddy Roosevelt said, 'Speak softly and carry a big stick,'" said Democratic Sen. John Hottinger, an assistant majority leader in the Minnesota Senate. "Well, our governor spoke loudly and carried a little stick." The lonesome governor has since recruited one veteran legislator. Sen. Bob Lessard, an iconoclastic fishing guide from a district close to the Canadian border, was a conservative Democrat for two decades, flirted with the Republicans, and now is an Independence Party caucus of one. Told of a proposal to require open caucus meetings, he joked, "Does that mean I have to invite the press every time I talk to myself?"

Steppin' up

In the last year, though, the governor has made some progress in defining and pressing his agenda and has slowly translated his underlying convictions—citizens should take personal responsibility for their actions, government should be lean and efficient—into policy initiatives. He's pushing for a merger of the state's economic development and employment agencies, for example, reasoning that business needs and training programs should be more closely aligned for the sake of efficiency and limiting redundancy.

Ventura has also emerged as a fiscal conservative, with proposals for big tax cuts, property-tax reform, and state spending that grows no faster than inflation. His property tax proposal, which has found considerable legislative support, would greatly increase the state's role in funding K-12 education. That would reduce school districts' reliance on local property taxes and help equalize funding among districts by making a school's support more dependent on the state's overall budget and less on the size and values of local property. Meanwhile, Ventura's plan would reduce current state payments to cities and towns, a complex subsidy system that obscures the true cost of local services.

To his credit, Ventura has advocated these proposals and other risky positions with the same colorful language that so endeared him to voters in 1998 and that is refreshing for everyone tired of watching politicians locked in perpetual spin mode. Ventura has, for example, harshly criticized the state's educational system as a financial black hole which takes all the money the state can give and still asks for more. Minnesota's public education system may not be as bad as those of other states, but it does tend to soak up whatever money is available and deliver it to salaries of the most senior teachers, without producing notable improvement in the performance of failing kids or higher rewards for effective teachers. Ventura has also blasted big donors, which is fair since politics has become too much the province of people of wealth and privilege, leaving many Americans—including the blue-collar men who feel Ventura speaks for them—feeling mistrustful and excluded.

But if Ventura's ideas are now bolder, that still doesn't mean they are fully thought through. Salary increases in the school system have tended to crowd out other important educational priorities, and Ventura seems deeply concerned about the issue. But he hasn't advo-

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cated the most dramatic solutions, such as instituting merit-pay systems and ending educational tenure. In past years, Ventura's commitment to ideas—even good ones—has also been conspicuously shallow. He'd announce an idea, make a superficial effort on its behalf, and blame someone else when it failed. Last year, for example, he proposed a new mechanism to fund the state's substantial transportation needs. Legislators rejected it, and Ventura didn't include it in this year's priorities. Let legislators figure out how to pay for more roads and bridges, he said.

This year, Ventura has pushed his budget and tax proposals more aggressively in speeches and op-ed pieces and has won some support from editorial writers. But as a one-man show with a thin skin, few natural allies in the legislature, and limited political expertise among his staff, it's tough for Ventura to carry his agenda very far.

Life of the Party

Of course, the realpolitik of outsider politics has created some of his problems. Neither Republicans nor Democrats have an interest in Ventura's success, which would improve his prospect of reelection next year. Ultimately, Ventura may have to settle for the Ross Perot effect, pushing major parties to tackle difficult issues, then vanishing once the issues are subsumed.

Whether he builds a party or not, though, the heaviest anchor on Jesse Ventura, and his best ideas, has always been Jesse Ventura. The governor's piques regularly divert media attention from his main agenda. His straight talk can be refreshing, but he seems to regularly alienate the people he will need to change anything. This year has brought a flap over badges labeled "official jackal" which he briefly required capitol reporters to wear. Then, in a meeting with an outdoors columnist who has criticized Ventura's commitment to conservation, the governor insulted hunters and combat veterans with a bit of braggadocio meant to explain why he doesn't hunt. "Until you've hunted man," said the former Navy SEAL, "you haven't hunted yet, because you need to hunt something that can shoot back at you to really classify yourself as a hunter."

In many ways, Ventura continues the same bad-boy, outsider shtick that served him well in professional wrestling and talk radio. When a high-school student asked him a few months back what he'd learned from his years with the World Wrestling Federation, Ventura ticked off lessons valuable to any performer, including a politician: name recognition, the ability to perform in front of a camera, the ability to ad-lib on a live mike. Then he mentioned a curious aspect of the WWF's pay scheme: "If you don't draw people, you don't get paid. The more people you draw, the more you get paid."

But politics is about more than drawing a crowd. Often, Ventura's efforts seem as evanescent as photo ops. Last year, for example, he appeared before a congressional committee, gulped a glass of milk for the cameras and appealed for a dairy-price-support formula that would be fairer to Midwestern dairy farmers. Congress didn't bite; now Ventura is telling farmers that they need to figure out how to take care of themselves. Asked last January about thousands of workers being laid off in the state's iron ore mines, he answered, "Maybe I should go on Leno again," as if the only thing a governor could contribute is an appeal for help on national television.

As happened after his famous *Playboy* interview, where Ventura insulted organized religion and confessed his wish to be reincarnated as a super-sized brassiere, Minnesota's governor has slipped in the polls, from a 71 percent approval rating in January to 57 percent in April. That could change. Minnesotans still seem to genuinely like this outsized, sometimes outlandish, outsider. But the slippage might well serve as a warning that if Ventura wants to stay popular, he'll have to produce the way other politicians do: by governing. ●

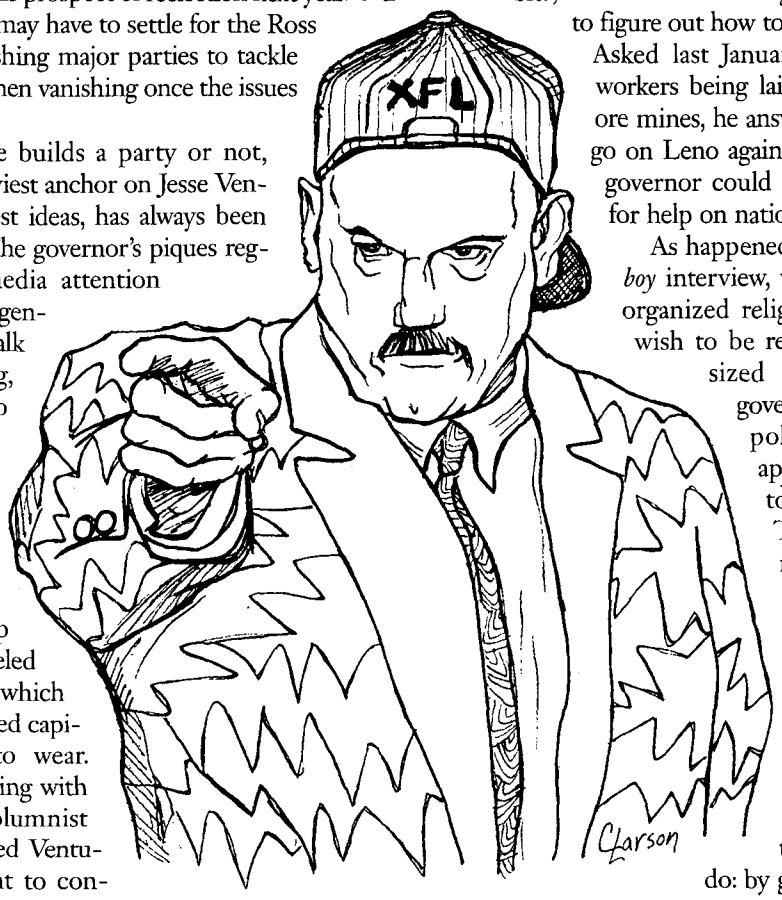

Illustration by Christina Larson

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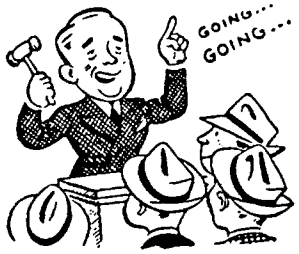
Tidbits & Outrages



The Republican National Committee will resell them at a discount.

Palm Beach County will soon be selling the voting machines used in last year's election on eBay.

Marmalade is still up for grabs.

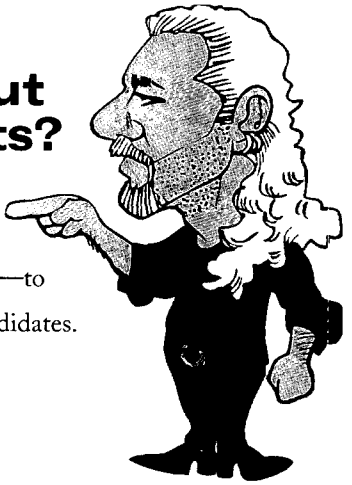
Jam maker J. M. Smucker is suing Albie's Food for violating its patent on crustless peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Getting the Last Laugh

Ohio's Department of Job and Family Services shelled out nearly $25,00 to humor consultants to improve "positive attitudinal perceptions of workplace transitions."

What about perm limits?

A Brooklyn electrician is starting a political action committee—HAIRPAC—to back hair-challenged candidates.



"Well, it depends on which head you saw." ~Liberian strongman Charles Taylor arguing to *Newsweek* that he shouldn't be accused of human rights violations for the skulls his soldiers posted on stakes during his country's civil war.

Next month: Pamela Anderson & the Pope!

Because there are 350 Starbucks in San Francisco

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown has created 350 mayoral "special assistant" jobs outside of the city's merit-pay regulations, with an annual payroll above $45 million.

Special thanks to Doug Hecox

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The Super

L.A. Superintendent Roy Romer may be the most talented man ever to run a big-city school district. He's also bound to fail. There's a lesson in that.

By Matthew Miller

Roy Romer flipped through the 20-page list of demands and felt the anger rising. He'd rushed across the country for this? It was October 30, and Romer, the former three-term Democratic governor of Colorado who had taken over July 1 as superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), had caught the first plane from Pittsburgh that morning for what he'd been told would be the final days of teacher-contract negotiations. The stalled talks had put most other district business on hold. For months Romer had personally wooed the union over breakfasts, at church meetings, and in countless listening sessions. As governor he had successfully mediated teacher talks in Denver and felt a reprise was certain. With state coffers flush, Romer reckoned, he'd lock up a win-win deal with the teachers early, clearing the decks for a single-minded district focus on better instruction for L.A.'s languishing kids. He'd offered a 10-percent raise from the start, hoping to skip the usual inch-by-inch dance. Romer had even reneged on a deal inked by his predecessor that tied administrators' pay hikes to teachers', leaving more money in the pot for teachers alone. Instead of thanking him, Romer knew, the union was plotting with administrators to gin up a strike.

Now, in the conference room at union headquarters, Romer, 72, flanked by 10 district colleagues, faced a phalanx of union reps across the table. Union president Day Higuchi walked Romer through page after page of demands. Eliminate travel for certain types of training, establish a "classroom bill of rights," cap class size permanently in all grades. District staffers exchanged confused glances. Higuchi was presenting the work of virtually every union committee. Most of the demands had been heard before.

"This is not what I expected," Romer said finally, boiling over. "I've been devoting a lot of time to this process, and neglecting other things I need to do in this district. It doesn't look like you're ready to seal the deal. I'm questioning whether you want this thing sealed at all."

"No, no, no," the union leaders said in chorus. They weren't trying to kill things, they insisted. This is important for our internal politics, they explained. We need to be able to say these issues were raised directly with the superintendent.

"When you get rid of all these," Romer replied, waving the handout, "and you're ready to deal with four or five important issues, I'll come back into the picture."

Romer was having his epiphany. He had impeccable pro-labor credentials. As chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Romer had plotted political strategy with the teacher unions, one of his party's most loyal and powerful supporters. Yet four months in the trenches had Romer thinking dangerous thoughts; namely that the teacher unions might be the biggest problem urban school systems faced. The bosses ran the place like an old-style industrial union, he felt, screaming about wages, hours, and working conditions—not collaborating like professionals on ways to lift student achievement. They demonized Romer and his staff to build power. And since the union largely controlled school-board elections, the whole system felt rigged. How was a super supposed to make headway when the union was on both sides of the table? Every time he tried to hang tough on issues of management authority over teacher assignment or training, for example, the union would get

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four members on Romer's seven-member board to pull the rug out. Frustrated, Romer had to face facts: The radical change in labor relations he felt was a prerequisite for improved student performance was not going to happen. It was tragic, Romer thought, but it was also reality. Time for Plan B.

Romer's appointment last year marked a climax of sorts for Los Angeles after a decade of well-meaning but ineffective attempts to fix its schools. In the early '90s, civic leaders flocked to "systemic reform" schemes with acronyms like LAMMP and LEARN. Millions of foundation dollars documented the dysfunction of the district central office, dubbed "the forbidden city" by one local wag. In 1999, frustrated by the district's resistance to change and by his own lack of official power over the schools, Mayor Richard Riordan, an uncharismatic multimillionaire with a strong moral streak, successfully bankrolled a three-person slate of reform-minded school-board candidates. The new board promptly ousted Ruben Zacarias, a superintendent widely viewed as incompetent. His interim successor, the well-regarded educator Ramon Cortines, came out of retirement to reorganize the sprawling district into 11 "local" districts with the hope that they might prove more manageable. Cortines also established the depressing (but revealing) goals of a textbook and clean bathroom for every student.

Romer had no constituency and no more knowledge of L.A. than a tourist. But he had the itch. "I'm a challenge junkie," he said. "This is the hardest job in America."

These sad milestones had not been reached when Romer found himself in L.A. last spring helping plan the Democratic convention. One day he met with Eli Broad, the billionaire real-estate developer and civic activist, in Broad's office in Century City. As they gazed over the L.A. basin from Broad's sweeping 38th-floor view, Romer told Broad about his passion for schooling. Romer had chaired the key education forums in the governors' groups. He'd studied the standards movement and felt it held promise for poor kids. He told Broad he planned to launch a think-tank-style project that he hoped would do for schools what the famed Jackson Hole group had done to advance ideas on health reform. Broad instantly saw a different possibility. With interim superintendent Cortines set to depart, he told Romer, the L.A. superintendent's job was open. Why don't you consider it, Broad suggested. It would be a chance to "do" education before reflecting on it.

Romer was brought up short. He had just bought a new house in Denver. He had a ranch outside of town, and 18 grandchildren. Most of his contemporaries were on the golf course. But the audacity of the idea appealed to him. Could a farmboy turned Midwestern governor possibly fix city schools in which 83 languages were spoken? It would mean walking into a district where 70 percent of the children were Latino, with more school kids (725,000) than 29 states. With 800 principals and 35,000 teachers, LAUSD's $8.8 billion budget dwarfed Colorado's; indeed, its budget exceeded that of 50 countries. As a matter of management, in dollar terms, the district would rank 229th on the Fortune 500. And the sprawling district was unimaginably diverse, encompassing dilapidated, gang-ridden campuses in South Central, where little kids prayed for no gunshots as they walked to school, as well as shiny new facilities on the affluent west side, where 17-year-old boys fondled designer-clad girlfriends in their BMWs between classes.

The district's educational woes, Romer was told, were equally outsized. A stunning two-thirds of L.A. third graders could not read at grade level. The dropout rate was more than twice the state average. One in four teachers lacked proper training and credentials, including roughly half of all newly hired teachers. The district had balked on an earlier pledge to end "social promotion" when up to 60 percent of kids were in danger of flunking.

What can I bring to this chaos? Romer asked himself. While he'd always seen himself as a man of action, he'd been a big-picture political leader, not a frontline implementer. Romer had no constituency and no more knowledge of L.A. than a tourist. But he had the itch. "I'm a challenge junkie," he said. "This is the hardest job in America." One of Romer's many baffled Colorado friends said pursuing the post seemed like "an attempt to avoid obscurity." Days after Broad planted the seed, however—and after consulting with his family, who knew what that sound in Romer's voice meant—Romer decided he would go for it.

"My first thought," recalls school-board president Genethia Hudley Hayes, a black reformer backed by Mayor Richard Riordan, "was, 'this is a 71-year-old white guy from Colorado.'" Romer dogged her for days seeking an audience to discuss his interest. Hayes asked him point blank about rumors that Romer was looking for a

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credential that would position him to become secretary of education if Al Gore won the election. Romer told her no: Like Hayes, he saw urban school improvement as a matter of social justice. And L.A.'s ethnic cauldron was America's future. If its troubled schools could be turned around, a new sense of hope would spread to other big cities. Hayes was impressed.

As the father of a pre-schooler, so was I. After moving to Los Angeles a few years earlier, I'd written several pieces on the schools and knew what a mess Romer was taking on. The idea that a man of Romer's stature was jumping in was genuinely exciting. Surely an accomplished, substantive politician seasoned by decades of experience (and not thinking about his next job) would have a shot at altering these kids' prospects. So I struck a deal to follow him on and off for what turned out to be most of his first year in office.

After months of watching Romer closely, I'm convinced that his experience, skills, and intellect make him the most talented person ever to hold the superintendent's job in Los Angeles, and perhaps in the nation. I also believe Romer is almost certain to fail, if by success we mean moving the needle on poor student achievement in a meaningful, lasting way. At a time when President Bush has pledged to "leave no child behind," with an education reform effort that no honest person can believe will make more than a marginal difference to troubled urban schools, Romer's early tenure shows how shockingly hollow the education debate remains. It's not simply that we're not having the right dialogue about urban schools; like some terminal patient in denial, we seem unable to acknowledge what the real conversation would sound like. "I am determined not to just be here to run an institution five percent better than the last guy," Romer told me at one frustrated moment. But what should he and the rest of us do if today's system makes that the outer limit of realistic aspiration?

Emblem of Disaster

The first time I met Roy Romer he'd just taken a nap. It was late June, a week before Romer was officially to start, and he was already on the job. Romer had stayed up until 2:30 a.m. in his hotel room the night before, mulling over ways to solve the Belmont High School mess. At $200 million, Belmont was the most expensive high school ever built in America. Or rather half-built: Its site above an old oil field near downtown, combined with epic mismanagement, had left the project abandoned due to risks of methane-gas exposure. Everyone was suing everyone. The fiasco had led Mayor Riordan to fund his winning troika of reform-minded school-board candidates. Belmont had been intended to help end the chronic overcrowding that forced the district to bus 15,000 kids a day from the inner city to the San Fernando Valley—up to two hours on the bus each way. The new board had voted to walk away from Belmont, for fear that the environmental and liability issues could never be settled. Belmont was a symbol of everything that had gone wrong in L.A.; despite forecasts of soaring enrollments, the district hadn't managed to build a single new high school in 20 years.

While Romer picked at pork and beans from a Styrofoam container in the central office's dreary cafeteria, I asked him how he planned to craft an agenda and make it happen. Romer tore a page from my pad and wrote down six items. First was making the new system of decentralized "local" districts work. Then "instruction," a world of reform unto itself. Then "space," meaning getting new schools built, renting space to relieve overcrowding, and dealing somehow with Belmont.

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Romer was convinced Belmont's gas problems could be remediated, but the political problem—finding a way to persuade his board to reverse a decision several members had been elected on—was another matter. That's the political equation that had kept Romer up late the night before. Maybe he could get some private-sector bigwigs to buy Belmont, he'd finally decided. They'd fix it up, immunize the district from liability, and operate it for a fee as a charter school. If the thing could attract private sector insurance, Romer reasoned, you'd know it had been built safely. And instead of being an emblem of disaster, he'd turn Belmont into a 21st-century model for urban schooling.

Labor negotiations came next, not only with the teachers, but with a dozen other bargaining units. Then Romer wrote "political turmoil," meaning, for starters, L.A.'s ethnic thicket; a well-funded voucher initiative on the November ballot; and strained relations with Sacramento, where the legislature held the purse strings and viewed LAUSD as such a black hole it planned to install a new special monitor to oversee it. Finally, Romer wrote "infusion of new talent." Nearly 10,000 teachers were on emergency certification without essential training, he said. They were warm bodies placed in front of the city's neediest kids. Decent principals were scarce. The downtown headquarters hadn't seen new blood in ages. Romer was coming in alone.

Hearing this catalog was exhausting. And this was just Romer's in-box. Romer's challenge was to repair a host of basic functions while at the same time figuring out how to move enough big levers on teaching and learning that student achievement could rise five or eight years out. He'd have to do this in what one longtime observer told me was "the least honest political culture" she'd ever seen, a bureaucracy "where if you say to someone, 'So does this mean that if "a" happens you'll do "b,"' they will look at you and say, 'Oh, yes,' and you know they are lying."

Despite the air of triage, Romer appeared energized, ready to act. At first glance, Romer seemed the classic chief executive: the silver hair, the dark suit, the firm baritone, the clipped, confident phrases. Surprises emerged on closer inspection. Romer wore either hiking boots or dark sneakers because a congenital deformity left one of his ankles swollen gigantically (and often painfully). His shirt collars were perpetually rumpled; his shirt pockets stuffed with pens, like an engineering grad student.

Romer leaned in over the table. "I come in and I've got to go really fast," he told me. "You have to have broad peripheral vision." Romer's cell phone rang. On the other end was a Democratic Party heavyweight who wasn't sure whether to congratulate Romer on his new assignment, or offer condolences. "It's stimulating, that's correct," Romer told his friend, chuckling. "I'll tell you what's doable later."

Disfunctional Logic

Romer bridled when the mayor pulled out the list. A few weeks into his tenure, he and Richard Riordan were having their first substantive meeting. They sat at Riordan's regular back table in The Pantry, a greasy spoon the mayor owned downtown.

"Here's a list of really good people you should talk to to help you think through this facilities issue," Riordan said. Romer knew the mayor's commitment to kids was genuine; for years before he'd entered public life, Riordan had donated millions for computers and reading programs. Some close to Riordan even speculated the mayor wanted to be superintendent himself when his term ended. But Romer wasn't about to take orders. He sidestepped Riordan's suggestion, saying he was pulling together his own team. Their talk grew frosty, two shrewd septuagenarians circling each other warily. Romer's message was clear: I don't work for you.

In truth, Romer knew he needed help. The more he learned about the facilities situation, the more he realized it was a nightmare. Fifty-five percent of L.A. students were already in schools operating on year-round, multitrack schedules. Los Angeles had more such campuses than Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, and Houston combined. Full-year scheduling increased school capacity by half, but at a huge academic price. To make it work, the district had to cut each track's school year by 17 days. In theory, schools made up for it by adding 39 minutes to each school day, or six minutes a class. In reality, as everyone knew, those six minutes vanished into the ether. Yet with enrollment expected to rise from 725,000 to 800,000 over a decade, every child was slated to attend a year-round school within five years.

At first Romer told staff this was intolerable. He wanted kids back on a normal schedule by the end of his three-year contract. Then they'd offer intensive remedial classes over the summer for kids who needed it. Romer told everyone they'd need to think creatively—they'd rent space, streamline the construction process, mobilize the city. "His goal was right," one of the new local district superintendents, a 25-year LAUSD veteran, told me. "But once he learned of the magnitude of the things we have to do to build schools," this person said, Romer had to accept that it would happen only on a much longer timeline, if ever.

In L.A.'s dense metropolis, finding workable school sites and getting support from the neighborhood meant

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navigating a political minefield. And there were other snags: One promising site ran into trouble when planners were told that to get to school, kids from the nearby housing project would have to walk through a rival gang's territory. Meanwhile, one earthquake-related law, the Field Act, effectively killed Romer's sensible rental idea. As one critic put it, the law essentially required schools to be able to withstand "a nuclear strike." Most existing buildings couldn't pass muster without costly structural work to thicken walls and deepen footings. That left the district building from scratch.

As the real-estate staff told Romer, two and half years could easily pass from the time a site was located to the time it received approval to break ground; a district rule of thumb reckoned on five years to build a school. This was astonishing, given the scale of the need—and compared with retail chains, for example, that routinely opened a hundred stores a year. Still, as Romer learned, amending the Field Act seemed impossible: Who wanted to be the politician who voted to relax the seismic code when the first kid died? This reluctance was complicated by the dearth of Latinos in positions of power. "You cannot have black, Jewish, [or] white leaders saying we're going to suspend earthquake safety regulations for Latino children," one activist told me. "It's just not going to happen." In the dysfunctional logic of LAUSD, therefore, it was "better" to bus city kids two hours each day while downtown buildings stood empty.

Some officials joked perversely that it was best not to worry about the district's appalling dropout rate; efforts to keep kids in school only made the overcrowding worse.

Some officials joked perversely that it was best not to worry about the district's appalling dropout rate; efforts to keep kids in school only made the overcrowding worse. The prefab, portable classrooms installed on central city campuses gave them a shantytown feel, and shrank playgrounds to the vanishing point. In one school, auxiliary services like speech therapy were conducted, literally, in a closet. In another, a teacher taught science in an auditorium, wheeling around a cart with beakers in lieu of a classroom lab. In tonier Pacific Palisades, meanwhile, the elementary school basketball court boasted a million-dollar view of the ocean.

One top district official, a 30-year veteran, told me he believed the district would only make headway on construction if it bussed enough poorer kids to L.A.'s wealthier, less crowded west side, threatening the elite's tranquility. To be sure, Romer was coming up with creative ideas at the margin. He was taking options on land, allowing the district not to lose sites while plowing through early approvals as it had in the past. He struck a deal to house an innovative new high school in a Department of Water and Power facility that would focus on science and technology, and use DWP professionals as instructors. Still, Romer knew the depressing truth: When set against the surge in enrollment, the most aggressive facilities plan deemed remotely feasible—adding 65,000 new seats over six years—would leave the district more overcrowded than it was today.

Delusions of Mediocrity

"I'm an impatient soul. The reason we're not doing grades 3 to 5 is because textbooks are not available?" It was mid-July, and Romer was meeting in his office with three top staffers on the district's big reading initiative. An unopened salad from the cafeteria sat on his desk, alongside Romer's ever-present yellow legal pad and blue felt-tip pen. A promising literacy program called "Open Court" had been launched in grades K-2 under his predecessor Cortines, and Romer wanted to expand it. But, as one staffer told Romer, the state hadn't yet approved the texts for grades 3 to 5, so state funds couldn't be used to buy the books.

"What if you want to buy *Moby Dick*?" Romer snapped.

"That has to be on a state-approved list," he was told.

Like a management consultant, Romer drew a staircase representing the diagnostic tests Open Court used at six week intervals on a nearby white board. "If you doubled the time on a reading program, how much would that increase learning of reading—10 percent? 20 percent?"

While the staff mulled this question, Romer erased the staircase and wrote down four items: "more time"; "coaching"; "Open Court texts"; and "two semesters."

"Let's assume we're sitting on the supreme throne of how to improve learning in this district," Romer said expansively. "You'd probably get a bang from all of this and should do all of them—but which gets you the most?"

The consensus was swift: Textbooks and coaching—that is, a corps of reading coaches who teach teachers how to teach reading because too many sim-

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ply couldn't. It was the kind of focus that had delivered results under Superintendent Anthony Alvarado in New York's District Two, a model Romer admired. Romer peeled the sticky wrap off the Styrofoam container and stabbed at his salad. "I'm not trying to be harsh with this question," he said, "but why did it take so long for us to get to this point?"

In math, they told him, the situation was even worse. In eighth grade and above, they explained, the math teachers were better because they tended to be math majors. But the early grades were a mess. And training for math teaching was more complicated. All teachers knew how to read, after all—they just might not know how to teach it. But many early grade teachers had genuine math phobias.

"What's the content level for third-grade math?" Romer barked.

Multiplication tables, division, that kind of thing, came the reply.

"What percent of math teachers in grades 3 to 5 are adequate?" Romer asked.

The staffers looked at each other a little helplessly, unused to being pushed in quite this way.

"Forty to 50 percent" are adequate, they finally offered.

"Excuse me," Romer erupted, "but how can the most technically advanced nation in the world have a situation where maybe 40 percent are adequate?" Romer tilted back in his chair and put his feet up on the desk. He squinted at them. "Any logical person coming in from Mars would say, 'What gives here?' I'm really genuinely curious. What is the culture of the society that lets this happen?"

The question hung there. Romer paused. "What do we plan to do about it?" A training program for math teachers starts next March, one staffer explained. Romer suddenly looked weary, as if registering that this was eight months away. He took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes. He folded and refolded a Post-It into tiny pieces.

"Let me tell you," he said quietly. "We spend $8 billion in this district. We have 70,000 employees in it. We have to make this work. We have a plan," he said, pointing to the board. "But is it enough? Is it fast enough? Should I set up an office of the 10 best budget cutters in the world to review every [outside] contract we have and say, 'Cut them in half and put the resources into accelerating this?'" Could they use the money wisely if he did? Romer wondered. "I'd like you to quantify it," he said, asking them to bring back options to redirect more money to textbooks. It was Friday afternoon; Romer wanted the numbers Monday morning. The staffers exchanged unhappy glances as the meeting broke up.

Then Romer stopped them with one more thing. "Any chance we could have bright math kids in senior high school teach the elementary school kids?" The abysmal math-teaching gap was gnawing at him. "Ah, that's probably too embarrassing to do," he said, shaking his head.

School Prayer

In the recession of the early 1990s, as part of a deal mediated by then-Assembly Speaker (now San Francisco Mayor) Willie Brown, Los Angeles teachers took a 10 percent pay cut; to soften the blow, senior teachers were given considerable power over the schools, grade levels, and tracks to which they were assigned. Teachers also won the right to pick certain school administrators. To Romer and others, this cession of authority made it

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impossible to manage the system intelligently, and to hold principals accountable for their schools' performance. Reclaiming this authority in exchange for a pay hike was Romer's chief aim in the contract talks.

In practice, said school board president Hayes, the current labor agreement was not only unwieldy, but discriminatory. Upper-middle-class parents who knew how to work the system got their kids on a "traditional" school schedule. There they were taught by the best senior teachers, who preferred that schedule as well. The poorer a child was, the likelier she was to be on a track taught by teachers with emergency credentials or who were teaching "out of field" in subjects they hadn't really mastered.

In elementary schools, teachers basically chose their classes by seniority. That meant a senior teacher could get a first-grade class where the student-teacher ratio was (by law) 20 to 1 and the kids were younger and easier to control, even if she didn't know anything about teaching reading. Other senior teachers preferred grades 3, 4, or 5 precisely because they didn't have to teach reading, which was hard. In all these cases, the principal didn't have the authority to assign a talented reading teacher he knew was better for the kids. Taken as a whole, the system seemed perversely designed to pair the least prepared teachers with the neediest kids.

Union politics made a fix difficult, however, because the senior teachers who'd been around 10 or 20 years had the clout—and they benefited most from these prerogatives. None of the ambitious officials vying to succeed Higuchi as president wanted to antagonize this group; and with half of all new teachers quitting after three years, no younger block could form a stable counterweight to the veterans' power.

Romer was, at first, undaunted. He also wanted more than the raise-for-authority deal. Romer was appalled by the six-hour day on campus that teachers had secured by contract, and he demanded more time each month for needed "professional development." Romer wanted principals to have the power again to name their own "deans" and "coordinators," which Romer felt could be important junior management posts useful for grooming the desperately needed new generation of principals.

Teachers saw these proposals through jaundiced eyes. Letting the principal assign teachers made sense in theory; but with the mediocre crews actually running most schools, it wasn't so clear. Why should a history major get stuck teaching immigrant English and coaching the soccer team because some middle-school Mussolini said so? It was already hard enough to keep good people in the classroom. Teachers were happy to consider more time for professional development, meanwhile, so long as the district would pay them for it. In any event, the union argued, Romer & Company didn't have a clue as to how to use the extra hours in the first place.

While the unjust distribution of top teaching talent might be a problem from the system's point of view, the union conceded, at the level of the individual teacher, what did the district expect? The fact that a white, 53-year-old teacher-of-the-year in suburban Woodland Hills, for example, didn't want to drive an hour and a half to South Central to teach reading didn't make her a racist. It wasn't what she had signed up for. If you tried to force her to do it, she'd find other work. As Romer was learning, everyone's position deserved empathy when examined in isolation; somehow, however, it added up to an intractable morass.

The big picture was disheartening. The district's tiny, pilot merit-pay proposal that would have been voluntary at participating schools had been shouted down as unthinkable. Salaries, which would start around $37,000 and rise to an average of $54,000 after Romer's raises, remained far too low to lure the best college graduates to teaching, especially given L.A.'s tough working conditions. Yet the only rational way to raise pay substantially—ending the union's traditional lockstep pay schedule (under which a biochemistry graduate with lucrative options had to be paid the same as an Phys. Ed. major with the same tenure)—was never on the table. Without addressing such fundamental ways to draw fresh talent in large numbers to the teaching corps, the talks seemed a depressing effort to more fairly ration mediocrity.

In December, Romer took questions for two hours from hostile teacher-union chapter chiefs. It was the kind of session no super had dared before; though the chiefs didn't love what Romer had to say, it was hard not to respect him for facing them head-on. As the meeting ended, an impassioned black teacher, who had assailed Romer, caught him in the doorway and took his hand.

"You know," she said, "we ought to pray about this thing. We've got to get over this. We've got to get back together." Romer thought she was going home to pray and wanted him to do the same. "Yeah," he said, "that's a good idea." No, she said, he didn't understand. She meant right then and there. She put her other hand on Romer's and closed her eyes. While a crowd of stunned teachers looked on, they prayed.

To Live Or Die in L.A.

When he was weighing the idea, Romer promised himself three indulgences if he was crazy enough to take

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the L.A. job: He'd live on the beach, have a great "hi-fi" (Romer's a jazz lover), and drive a convertible. One crisp Saturday morning, I visited Romer at his beachfront condo to talk about his life. Romer usually had working breakfasts on Saturday; he'd pick the brains of small groups of teachers, principals, or other instructional personnel over eggs and coffee. Work was the most deeply ingrained part of Romer's character, the legacy of a childhood spent on his family's farm in Holly, Colorado. In the Dust Bowl during the Depression, there wasn't much else. "I never learned to recreate," Romer explained sheepishly. "I don't do anything but work."

"I came from a very small town where you always feel inadequate," Romer told me. But he was determined to make it in the wider political and intellectual worlds. Romer studied agriculture at Colorado State and went to law school at the University of Colorado. He got married, joined the Air Force, and was sent to Germany as a prosecutor. When he came back, Romer spent a year at Yale Divinity School, where he read "most of [Paul] Tillich and all that stuff," not seeking the ministry, but wanting to think life through. After a few years in a Denver law firm, Romer won a seat in the state legislature at 28. Four years later, he moved up to the state senate. Four years after that, at 36, Romer decided to run against an incumbent Republican for the U.S. Senate. It was 1966. Romer had marched in Selma and toured Vietnam. Party elders said he had a big future. Then Romer lost the senate race in a blowout. It was a big Republican year nationally, and few Democratic challengers fared well.

In the months after his loss, Romer became increasingly obsessed with the Vietnam War, reading everything there was to read in English about the conflict. Romer became convinced that the "white man's arrogance" he saw at work in the Southern civil rights battles had brought us to the brink of calamity in Vietnam. But with the luster now off the rising star, Romer's deepening preoccupation with the war made him seem flaky and too intense. Romer's law firm kicked him out, reasoning that a visible anti-war activist was bad for business.

With five kids to support and feeling he no longer fit, Romer dropped out of politics and started over at 37. The energy and risk-taking he had brought to politics made him a natural entrepreneur. Romer developed real estate, building homes west of Denver. He and a partner bought ski areas and flight-training centers. Romer became one of the biggest dealers of John Deere farm and industrial equipment in the country. By 1975, when Governor Richard Lamm (who had worked on an early Romer campaign) brought him back into public life as his agriculture commissioner, Romer was financially independent. After subsequent stints as Lamm's chief of staff and state treasurer, he set his sights on the statehouse. He shaved his dark beard and mustache, which one aide says gave him the look of "a leftover '60s chemistry professor," and won the election.

Though Romer developed the look of a leader, his iconoclasm remained. He sat for his official governor's portrait in what was then his trademark bomber jacket. He was seen jogging in street clothes and shoes. But mostly Romer worked. When the push was on to get voters to approve Denver's new airport, Romer ordered staff to make sure he was out stumping earlier each day than Denver Mayor Federico Peña. Romer's 5:45 a.m. "oatmeals" at truck stops captured the public's imagination and were credited with putting the airport over the top.

Romer was tapped to be chair of the Democratic Party not long after leaving office in 1997, where he helped pare the party's massive post-1996 debt while fending off GOP attacks about White House fundraising excesses. He became a fixture on the Sunday news shows, defending the embattled Clinton administration. At the height of the Lewinsky mess, Romer was also forced, in an awkward irony, to admit to a "very affectionate relationship" with a longtime aide when a conservative weekly was on the verge of running embarrassing photos of the two.

Given his wealth and diversity of experience, Romer's observations about the superintendent's job carried weight. "The intellectual energy it takes is more demanding than anything I've ever done," he said, with real excitement. "There's the political layer. There is the management layer. There is the substantive layer." In his retreat by the beach, with its wide, gorgeous view of the Pacific, Romer's fascination with what he was trying to accomplish seemed to trump the day-to-day frustration.

Atlas Shrugged

Despite Romer's inner buoyancy, the political ground was shifting beneath him. Civic leaders whispered that if Romer couldn't produce a breakthrough with the teachers' contract, he was useless. They asked how he could possibly shake up the district with the career bureaucrats who'd been named by Cortines to the new local superintendent posts days before Romer came in—and whom Romer hadn't changed. Romer himself was finding it impossible to recruit for other top jobs. He sorely needed a chief information officer, for example, to push the district's ancient computer systems into the new century. But talented technology executives laughed when headhunters called from LAUSD; they sought lucrative private sector posts, not some civil service job. Romer ended up looking in the military.

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One day, after I'd sat with Romer through a particularly depressing meeting, he closed the door. "I don't want to be self-serving with these comments," he began. "But ... I am thinking harder and deeper than most people have thought about this damned place. You've got to make a judgement about that, because you've got to make decisions about whether you're just talking to hear yourself talk, or whether you are on target."

The average urban school superintendent stays in the job for two years and four months. Anyone familiar with leadership in complex organizations knows this tenure is too brief to change much that matters. The superintendents hailed by many experts—Rod Paige of Houston, who now serves as President Bush's education secretary, for example; or Tony Alvarado of New York's District 2—served much longer. Paige was Houston's superintendent for seven years; Alvarado had an uncanny 12-year run in New York. Scholars of the superintendency say their colleagues face an impossible task and a predictable pattern.

A city typically tells its new super, "We'll be patient, we know it takes time"—before firing him in a year or two as a way to "take action" when performance isn't improving.

"You put them into a situation where you're not allowed to bring in your own people, you're not allowed to fire people, you can't reward or sanction people," says Frederick Hess, professor of education at the University of Virginia, and author of *Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform*. "You have very few ways of monitoring performance. It's actually a miserable leadership position, and it doesn't matter that it's the school system—if you put the same kind of restrictions on Larry Ellison or Bill Gates or Michael Dell, you wouldn't expect them to be successful."

As Hess and others explain, a city typically tells its new super, "Hey, we'll be patient, we know it takes time"—before throwing him out a year or two later because it's a way to "take action" when performance isn't improving or has come at too high a price for vested interests. Superintendents complain they can't fairly be held accountable when the power in big districts is really held by the teachers union. To have any chance of surviving, most feel they need to deliver some kind of visible "results" fast.

The problem, of course, is that when a series of new leaders feel pressured to launch their own "initiatives," the fads pile up and no one pays attention to how they get implemented. The cycle breeds cynicism; teachers eventually hunker down, close the door and vow to do their best by the kids on their own, rather than be buffeted by the latest reform elixir. "The scary part," Hess adds, "is that none of this presumes bad intentions on anybody's part."

An aggressive corporate community; a vigilant press; meddling board members; entrenched unions; and neighborhoods fractured by race, language, religion, and income, all fighting for scarce resources over the one thing people care about most: kids. Add to this combustible mix the fact that urban school districts, unlike private corporations, reflect democracy at its most extreme. Everybody has a right to a say, and everybody exercises that right.

Since deep problems of poverty and family breakdown are involved in urban districts, and a thousand laws and constraints limit what superintendents can do on everything from facilities to teacher recruitment, there are no easy fixes. But analysts note that, broadly speaking, there are only two ways to create accountability for student progress in large systems: standards, or competition. The standards movement is getting its chance now. Depending on how well it delivers, the voucher movement, or at least more radical forms of public-school choice, may not be far behind. This remains true in spite of the defeat of poorly crafted voucher measures on the November 2000 ballot in California and Michigan. Poor black and Latino parents are open to measures that shake up districts that don't serve their kids. And as I learned from speaking with Latino officials in Los Angeles, minority leaders, despite longstanding Democratic Party ties with teachers unions, are increasingly open to vouchers as well

Romer believed in standards. His stature, plus the fact that he was not scheming for his next job, freed Romer from many ordinary survival pressures. He built on Cortines' reading initiative, for example, feeling no need to scrap it because it wasn't his idea. Romer's mantra of "instruction, instruction, instruction," and his quest to manage the system to improve it, came from his study of what had worked elsewhere. Romer told me once, only half in jest, that he was trying to compress into a

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few years everything that Tony Alvarado and other heralded educators had done over a lifetime. Yet in many ways Romer's experience was typical of his brethren's. "I didn't know what graduate level politics was until I took this job," he quipped to one audience.

Romer felt an old political hand like himself could beat the odds partly by using the bully pulpit to frame the way educators and citizens saw the district's mission. Take standards. What you need to know to fly a plane, Romer (the old pilot and flight school owner) told audiences, was the standard. The amount of time it took a student to master this material could vary—some took 35 hours, some 42 hours, and so on. But in school, he would then explain, we've said that seat time is what's fixed, and the output—what you learn—is variable. "We need to change that," Romer would boom, and you could hear tumblers clicking in brains across the room.

The Myth of Sisyphus

At the end of January, Romer and the union announced they had reached a deal; despite the district's spin and some modest rejiggering of managerial power, most observers agreed there were few significant changes. Mayor Riordan was furious about the lost opportunity. Eli Broad briefly considered funding a campaign against board approval of the pact. Both men, key allies in L.A.'s governing class, were said privately to have written Romer off. Romer, for his part, maintained he'd gotten the best deal he could without putting the district through a wrenching strike that would have produced little more. In late February, the school board approved the contract on a 4-3 vote, with the three members Riordan backed in the last election opposing it. Riordan withdrew his support for an incumbent board member who OK'd the deal and funded one of her opponents, as well as two other challengers, running in the upcoming board election. Riordan wanted a sustainable reform majority on the board that wasn't beholden to the unions. Romer had to wonder if he was really better off with a board in thrall to Dick Riordan, given the mayor's recent habit of declaring that he planned to work for the district after leaving office in July—and swirling rumors that Riordan wanted to be superintendent himself.

Meanwhile, eight months after that first night Romer stayed up thinking about Belmont, he had finally persuaded his board to at least study the thorny particulars again; the review would last through the end of Romer's first year. Romer had successfully persuaded Sacramento to back off the idea of a special LAUSD monitor; he'd also gotten the state to change how it allocated school construction funds, in order to give more to urban districts. He'd worked hard to infuse his senior team with his focus on instruction, requiring them, for example, to attend weekend retreats with nationally known experts. At one retreat, Romer had everyone, himself included, take a version of L.A.'s standard high school achievement exam. Some top officials found it tough going. "They're not looking at their watches [anymore]," said one Romer hire, explaining how longtime district staff responded to the boss. "They're thinking they've got to change or they won't be around." Still, 10 months in, Romer had brought in few new people. Teachers said it was hard to sense the new super's presence in the classroom.

In late March, First Lady Laura Bush made her maiden trip to L.A. to speak about teacher recruitment at Occidental College. Many local business leaders and other worthies involved in school reform attended. Even by the standards of scripted political events, Mrs. Bush's bromides were disappointing. But I was more stunned by how universally L.A.'s elites seemed to feel that Romer's chance had already come and gone. He gave away the store to the teachers and got nothing in return, one CEO told me. He's been here nearly a year and hasn't brought in his own team, griped another. The bureaucracy has swallowed him up. And who can even hear him through the clutter? Does anyone know or care what he's up to?

These critiques weren't unfair, I knew, yet somehow their tone made me angry. How much better would these big shots have done? Romer could hardly build schools on his own. He couldn't snap his fingers and make the union disappear. And his own board's politics were like quicksand. As I listened to L.A. luminaries render smug judgement on what Romer had wrought, I couldn't help thinking that none of them had traded their comfortable jobs for the quagmire of LAUSD. Romer had one hand tied behind his back, maybe both. What scars gave them the standing to be so confidently dismissive?

"What I'm waiting on is his diagnosis of the scope of the problem, which is dangerous for him to honestly portray," said Connie Rice, a prominent local public-interest lawyer. "It's dangerous for him to come out and say, this is how far under water we are." Others worried that two years from now Romer would still be passionately articulating what ailed L.A.'s schools, while little will have changed.

If so, it won't be Romer's fault alone. Romer's early experience raises the essential question that anyone serious about urban school kids must answer, and which President Bush's pledge to "leave no child behind" cynically mocks: What do we do when big district problems are orders of magnitude larger than any

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superintendent's capacity to address them? When well-meaning people in a dysfunctional equilibrium can't break old patterns? When the variables in the existing dialogue don't begin to encompass what's needed to make honest progress? Even if Romer were a benevolent dictator, it wouldn't be obvious what he should do. And a big-city superintendent, even one with Romer's ability, operates in a straitjacket so far removed from the powers of a benevolent dictator that "superintendent" might as well be its antonym.

The chief lesson of Romer's Sisyphean efforts thus far—coming, as they do, after two decades of ineffectual preoccupation with urban school improvement—is that the existing boundaries of discussion don't work. Whatever one's ideology, one thing is clear: Another decade of measures at the margin will leave millions of city school kids doomed. For conservatives who think vouchers are part of the answer, that means not advocating the typically puny $1,500 vouchers that would do nothing but fill a few empty parochial-school seats; it means a call for $10,000 vouchers that stand a chance of truly shaking up a system with incentives for new school formation. For liberals who want more money for teachers, it's time to admit that modest raises that can't change the career choices of top young graduates aren't worth debating. Fealty to lockstep union pay scales that block bolder efforts is completely indefensible. Only if each side surrenders its marginal shibboleths can the discussion about commitments on the right scale even begin.

Progress is possible. Other big urban school districts, such as Boston, Chicago, and Houston—where superintendents have more clout than Romer enjoys—have seen modest, but real, academic gains in recent years. No one can say what combination of reforms might lead to the truly major improvements that urban schools need. But as we've seen from falling crime rates and plummeting welfare rolls, it is possible to make serious headway against problems once thought to be intractable.

Ironically, the things Romer will be free to say when his L.A. stint is over may be more important for the cause of urban school improvement than anything he can do while he's in the saddle, given the constraints that come with trying to make things happen. In the meantime, what redeems Romer is what ultimately lifts all good politicians above their critics: He sought the power and was willing to take responsibility for *acting*.

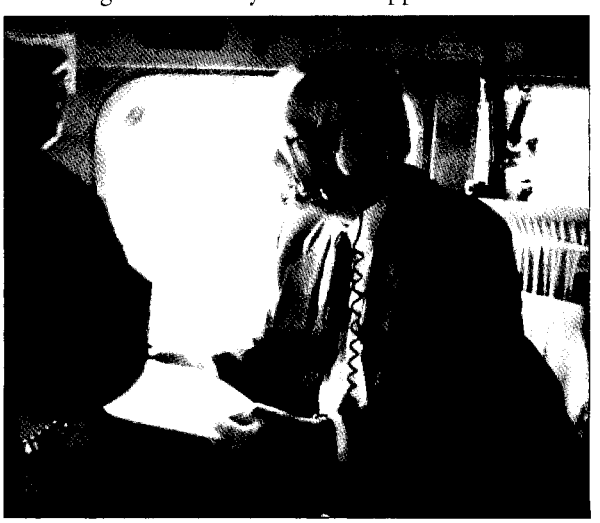
And Romer remains determined to act. When we met in his condo before Christmas, Romer looked out at the ocean, pensive. "On a Saturday morning, when most of my family and friends are back in Colorado, I have to ask myself the question, 'What are you doing, Romer?'"

He stood and paced the room. "I'm 72. I've got 8 or 10 years of productive functioning work left. I've got to make the most meaning of that that I can. You've got to take what you are given. I'm no longer governor. I'm sure not president of the United States. I'm here. This is a very, very important job ... It's kind of like Normandy. You've got 11 fronts out there, you can't move them all simultaneously. You've got some, you're pushing more, but eventually you know you've got to move all of them." He turned and looked at me. "There's no miracle cure here. There's no bomb you can throw and cure it. There's no wand you can wave. It is incremental. It is painfully incremental. This society doesn't change unless you do it incrementally. You've got to accept that, but then you've really got to be smart about getting all the pieces of the orchestra moving it."

Then Romer's face brightened, and he told me about a meeting he had had the night before. California had barely taken advantage of a new federal program to insure poor kids without health coverage. The state was embarrassed not to be using the aid. Los Angeles had most of the eligible children. Romer wanted a new district outreach program.

"It's kind of like the grocery store ... adding a new department called 'video,'" Romer said, his voice rising with enthusiasm. "We need to add a new department called 'universal health coverage.' Have this agency called LAUSD be the place where you can come in and you enroll your kid for lunch and he's automatically also enrolled for health coverage ... It's a new idea, but it's an incremental thing. It'll mean kids getting their teeth fixed and getting their eyes [fixed] so they can see the blackboard. We'll get those families believing in this institution," Romer said.

It's a great idea. Maybe it will happen.



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Ker-Splat!

How comic books lost their edge

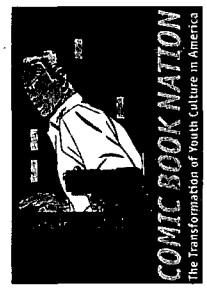
By Jacob Heilbrunn

Comic books made me a snob. As a child, I was riveted by Spider-Man and went on to become meticulous about grading my comics' condition and completing series numbers. Now they lie entombed in acid-free boxes and Mylar bags in my house, waiting for divestment.

Occasionally, I even buy one for old times' sake. Spider-Man, like me, appears to have grown up, but his marriage seems to be on the rocks. Still, it's getting harder and harder to find comics because a big cultural shift has taken place: Kids don't read them anymore.

Comic books, like paper routes and small drugstores, have become an endangered species. A series of corporate takeovers, coupled with the dilution of the product and the rise of computer games and music videos, means that the financial state of Marvel and other companies is shaky at best. Once prominently displayed at newsstands and drugstores, the main outlet for comic sales is specialty shops that cater to the *cognoscenti.* Not surprisingly, the disappearance of comic books means that they have become part of the national nostalgia industry. Indeed, at a time when George W. Bush's proudest initiative is to host "T-ball" at the White House in memory of his own Little League exertions, it probably shouldn't surprise anyone that comic books are attracting new attention.

Enter Bradford W. Wright. A historian at the University of Maryland. Wright is the first serious historian to tackle comics. He is a seasoned veteran of the comics world. He quips in his preface that "few works of historical scholarship can truly claim to represent a lifetime of research as this one does." Though never a serious collector—he lacked the cash—Wright was an avid reader as a child. Now, he has produced a fascinating survey of the rise and fall of comics.



COMIC BOOK NATION: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America
by Bradford W. Wright
Johns Hopkins University Press, $28

Unburdened by any theoretical apparatus, his *Comic Book Nation* is informative, humorous, and penetrating. Wright never devolves into minutiae likely to bore the non-initiate, and his narrative is extremely well-organized. His theme is simple and persuasive: Comic books provide an acute lens through which to study shifts in popular culture, from World War II to Vietnam to the Reagan era. He argues that editors, mostly Jewish and liberal, sought to challenge racism, fascism, poverty, and the threat of nuclear war. Perhaps his most provocative argument is that the dress rehearsal for today's culture wars about television and rap music took place in comic books.

According to Wright, comic books, which first appeared in the early 1930s, occupied a status just above pornography. Crude and formulaic, they were written by aspiring artists eager to see their names in print. The genre didn't take off until 1939, when Superman was published by Detective Comics (DC). Wright shows the extent to which Superman was a New Deal creation. His two young creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, cast Superman as, in their words, a "champion of the oppressed ... devoted to helping those in need." Wright notes that "in his initial episode, Superman saves a falsely accused prisoner from a lynch mob, produces evidence that frees an innocent woman on death row, and defends

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a woman about to be beaten by her husband." Later on, Superman destroys a conspiracy involving a senator, a lobbyist, and a munitions manufacturer who seek to foment a war in Latin America. Other DC characters would take the same line, tackling corrupt political bosses and defending the common man. The underlying message was that American society required might to make right. Renowned cartoonist Jules Feiffer has observed that "once the odds were appraised honestly it was apparent you had to be super to get on in this world." More conservative figures had their doubts about the new form. Frank Vlamos, writing in *The American Mercury*, complained that comics represented "the most dismaying mass of undiluted horror and prodigious impossibility ever visited on the sanity of a nation's youth."

But World War II ratified the new interest in comics. GI's whiling away time by leafing through comics became a staple of wartime propaganda. One of four magazines shipped to troops overseas was a comic book, and 35,000 copies of *Superman* alone went abroad each month. So enthusiastic for war were Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, who produced *Captain America*, that they inspired isolationist outrage by having the good captain denounce Nazism before the U.S. had entered the war. According to Wright, *Captain America* "came to epitomize not only the values and fighting spirit of the national war effort but also the fortunes that comic book publishers would reap from their enlistment into patriotic wartime culture."

Fascism could not have fit better into the Manichean world of comic books. Once prosperity hit the United States, publishers had to readjust. Fighting social inequality was out. Fantasy was in. No one personified the shift better than Superman. "Having launched his career as a crusading champion of social justice and a militant antifascist," says Wright, "by the end of the war Superman had assumed his befitting role as the conservative elder statesman among comic book heroes, above the political and social concerns of the day." Superman became a god-like figure, picking up new powers as well as a self-sustaining world that included a Fortress of Solitude in the Arctic. However, the industry's sales slumped as it produced anodyne tales of Goody-Two-Shoes who always did right.

Ironically, comic books became dull as dishwater because of the more ghoulish fare published by EC comics—as distinct from DC—which triggered a mini-culture war. Wright explains that EC comics offered something of a precursor to the upheaval of the 1960s, questioning authority before it was fashionable to question anything. In perhaps the most notorious panel printed by EC comics, a murderous baseball team plays a midnight game with the limbs and entrails of a victim. Little was left to the imagination, and what little was left was amply spelled out. "See the catcher with the torso strapped on as a chest protector, the infielders with their hand-mitts, the stomach-rosin bag, and all the other pieces of equipment that once was Central City's star pitcher, Herbie Satten," read one caption. Another issue depicted a man holding a bloody ax in one hand and a woman's severed head in the other. "Corpses in various states of decay and reanimation," Wright says, "regularly adorned the covers."

"A commercial expression of cultural defiance," he writes, "EC brilliantly perceived the alienated generation among young people and recognized youth dissatisfaction as a marketable commodity." The reaction came quickly. By 1948, Catholic schools were conducting bonfires of comic books. Wright notes that questions about the moral staunchness of youth and its ability to resist communism hovered over an entire generation.

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Illustration by Robert Soule

Dr. Fredric Wertham, a New York City psychiatrist who had emigrated to the United States from Germany, soon became the industry's blood-hound. In 1948, he presented his findings to the Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy in an address titled "The Psychopathology of Comic Books." In coming years, Wertham would find plenty of material to decry, resulting, in 1954, in his 400-page indictment, *Seduction of the Innocent.* Wertham complained, for example, that "one of the stock mental aphrodisiacs" in comic books was to show large breasts; when that wasn't the case, the publishers were promoting homosexuality. Batman's sidekick, Robin, he said, was "usually shown in his uniform with bare legs" and often stood "with his legs spread, the genital region discreetly evident." Wertham's charges were taken seriously. Soon enough, William M. Gaines, the publisher of EC, found himself facing off against a Senate investigative committee headed by Estes Kefauver. It was a rout. Kefauver declared that a panel in the July issue "seems to be a man with a woman in a boat and he is choking her to death here with a crowbar. Is that in good taste?" "I think so," was all Gaines could answer. The prudish Comics Code was slammed into place, and the industry ground out boring, uncontroversial bilge.

The decisive change came in the early 1960s, when Stan "the Man" Lee revived Marvel Comics. Lee's accomplishment cannot be exaggerated. He invented the superhero as anti-hero. Spider-Man was a smart-aleck outsider who enraged the establishment newspaper run by cigar-chomping J. Jonah Jameson; as Peter Parker, Spider-Man was a nerdy student, mocked as a wimp and tormented by the class bully, Flash Thompson. The rest of the time, his Aunt May was fussing over him, or he was desperately trying to earn money to keep her financially afloat by snapping pictures for, of all people, J. Jonah Jameson. The Incredible Hulk may not have been financially strapped but he was even more alienated than Spider-Man, battling the U.S. Army as well as the Fantastic Four.

Nor were Lee's heroes flawless. Far from it. Lee had the Fantastic Four's Invisible Woman abandon her lover, Mr. Fantastic, for several issues to enjoy a fling with the Submariner. The Avengers fought each other as much as they did supervillains. Comics anticipated the free-wheeling social atmosphere of the '60s. Stan Lee became a favorite speaker at universities like Columbia and New York University.

"A 1965 college poll conducted by *Esquire*," Wright says, "revealed that student radicals ranked Spider-Man and the Hulk alongside the likes of Bob Dylan and Che Guevara as their favorite revolutionary icons ... The outsider hero had arrived as the most celebrated figure in youth culture, and Marvel had him." Indeed, one letter writer asked whether Marvel had considered the "close ideological connection between your Spider-Man and the Dadaist-Pop Art movement?" For several issues, Stan Lee even changed the Marvel logo to read "Pop Art," in emulation of Andy Warhol. Lee also introduced the wry, self-deprecating humor that would later become a staple of mainstream advertising: "If you don't buy this issue, we'll never talk to you again!" would be emblazoned on the cover of an issue of Spider-Man. Another Lee innovation was to create the absurdist "no-prize." If a reader spotted an error or made a valuable suggestion, he would be awarded the "no-prize," which was exactly what it said it was. Competition was keen.

The real backlash came in the late 1960s, when Lee and a new generation of writers tackled themes ranging from American guilt in Vietnam to drug abuse to the environment. In Spider-Man #96, which the Comics Code famously refused to approve, Lee had a black youth questioning an industrialist about his social responsibility, or lack thereof. "What have you done to fight drugs?" he asks. "Look! I'm just one man! It's not my responsibility." The youth replies, "You're rich! You've got influence! That makes it your responsibility." After Watergate, Captain America uncovered a conspiracy to take over the U.S. government led by the president

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(guess who?) himself. A despondent Captain even chucked his uniform for several issues, while surrogates try to take his place. In *The Defenders*, a future is depicted in which citizens suffer the effects of global warming. Wright says that "times had changed to such an extent that comic books now garnered praise in the media for questioning old assumptions and challenging established authorities instead of endorsing traditional American values." In the Reagan era, Marvel—by then the only company that counted—mixed things up a bit. Daredevil became a vigilante, featured holding a gun on a cover with the slogan "No More Mister Nice Guy." One of the most popular new characters, Wolverine, meted out summary justice; he was "Dirty Harry" with adamantine claws.

In the Reagan era, Daredevil became a vigilante, featured holding a gun with the cover slogan "No More Mister Nice Guy."

If Wright's book has a weakness, it is its implicit assumption that the radical left-wing politics that sometimes seeped into comic books meant that they were more sophisticated. But Wright cannot bring himself to admit that the mental and moral world of the creators of the left was not always that much more complex than that of the right. Wright himself spins the story, referring, for example, to EC comic book writer and artist Harvey Kurtzman as the "conscience of EC." Kurtzmann, we are told, worked "briefly for the leftist *Daily Worker*..." Ummm, leftist? It was, and remains, a communist newspaper. To be sure, Wright properly notes the efforts by Stan Lee to introduce black characters, first as bystanders, then as superheroes, into the Marvel lineup, something other publishers were too cowardly to attempt. The first black Marvel character was an African prince called "The Black Panther"—even before the radical militant group the Black Panthers was on the scene. If anyone was the conscience of the comic book industry, it was Lee.

Wright might also have noted the zany effect that comics have had on politics. Nina Easton's recent book *Gang of Five* noted that the spirit of *MAD* magazine had a decisive effect on shaping the spirit of conservatism. The conservatives of William Kristol's generation adopted, wittingly or unwittingly, the anarchistic spirit which *MAD* espoused. They were the ones who questioned authority and reveled in irreverence, dismissing liberal pieties. The covers of the *Weekly Standard* are straight from *MAD*, like the notorious one of Bill Clinton swinging with Monica in a White House jungle. The irreverence of comic books seeped into the popular culture in ways that politicians can only ignore at their peril; Frank Rich noted during the 2000 campaign that even Stan Lee, introducing Al Gore at a fundraiser, had a hard time getting the former vice president to loosen up. But like Cold Warriors who ended up without a job, comic books may have been too successful. Wright believes that "comic books are losing their audience not because they have failed to keep up with changes in American culture but because American culture has finally caught up with them. America at the turn of the 21st century has a pervasive consumer culture based largely on the perpetuation of adolescence." Well, maybe. But comics used to appeal to the young because they anticipated, not just mirrored, popular culture. Now they've become a nostalgia item, ripe for documentation. Can Ken Burns be far behind? ●

american catholics in the public square

American Catholics in the Public Square is a three-year research project aimed at

- identifying distinctive elements in a Catholic approach to civic life;
- exploring the strengths and weaknesses of this tradition in the American context;
- examining how the tradition is being currently expressed and transmitted;
- analyzing the obstacles, within the culture or the church, that impede a more robust Catholic presence in the public square.

American Catholics in the Public Square is co-sponsored by the Commonweal Foundation in New York City and the Faith & Reason Institute in Washington, D.C. It is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Information about the project, its past and future conferences, reports, and papers can be found at **www.catholicsinpublicsquare.org.**

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TO THE PEARLY GATES — COURTESY OF PROCTER & GAMBLE

John Ashcroft's own words:

"...He held voluntary daily prayers with his staff and anointed himself before each of his two terms as Missouri's governor. He did so again using a bowl of Crisco oil, before being sworn in in 1995 as senator."

The son of an Assemblies of God minister and educator, Mr. Ashcroft has woven his private faith into his public life. In his 1998 book, "Lessons from a Father to His Son," he wrote that he held voluntary daily prayers with his staff and anointed himself before each of his two terms as Missouri's governor. He did so again, using a bowl of Crisco oil, before being sworn in in 1995 as senator.

The act of anointment, he wrote in his largely autobiographical book, replicated the practice of "the ancient kings of Israel, David and Saul," who Mr. Ashcroft said "were anointed as they undertook their administrative duties."

—*The New York Times*
January 7, 2001

...America that was wont to conquer others
hath made shameful conquest of itself...

—***Nicholas Stephen Poluhoff***

"A great empire and little minds go ill together." —Edmund Burke, 1729-1797

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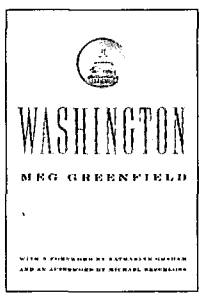
Political Booknotes

Wading Through Meg

By Timothy Noah

Washington IS THE FIRST PIECE of Meg Greenfield's writing that I have ever read from start to finish. Or rather, the first bylined piece of writing; as the longtime editorial page editor of *The Washington Post*, she must have penned many unsigned editorials that I got through, and probably quite a lot that I admired. Before her untimely death from cancer in 1999, Greenfield was among the most respected figures in Washington journalism, much-praised for her sharp intelligence and much-feared for her ability to shape opinion. Among her many assets was a close friendship with Katharine Graham, the publisher who elevated the *Post* to the top ranks of American journalism. But the high esteem in which Washington held Greenfield was more than just Machiavellian; as an editor, Greenfield really was capable of shucking respectability and embracing truly creative ideas, the best example being her decision to sign up *Village Voice* cartoonist Mark Alan Stamaty to write "Washingtoon," a seemingly naive but in fact quite canny and subversive sendup of Washington politics that made an enormous hit in the 1980s.



WASHINGTON
by Meg Greenfield
Public Affairs, $26.00

Why, then, was I never able to hurtle my eyeballs through the bylined columns Greenfield wrote for *Newsweek* and *The Washington Post*? For several years, I blamed myself. Over time, though, it dawned on me that almost nobody else I knew seemed to be reading her, either, even though I traveled in journalism circles where people tended to read the op-ed pages and talk about what they found there with deep interest. It was one of those great unmentionable facts of Washington life: Meg Greenfield, writer, was a bore.

I'd like to be able to report that the authorial light Greenfield kept decorously hidden under a bushel in life blazes forth in this posthumous volume. But *Washington*, I'm afraid, is a bore, too. The book sums up Greenfield's views about Washington, and traces her own mental development from a smug Adlai Stevenson liberal to a more mature and inquisitive person capable of empathizing with politicians of various political stripes. That's just the sort of evolution this magazine is always urging on Washington journalists so that they might better understand how and why policymaking goes poorly or well. For Greenfield, though, empathy seems to have been an end in itself. Although as editorial page editor and writer she was no doubt called upon to apply her subtle understanding of Washington anthropology in deciding where the *Post* should stand on various issues, as a writer—and henceforth, when I refer to "Greenfield," you can assume I mean Greenfield the columnist and author—she seemed content to ruminate about human frailty and folly. To paraphrase Clover Adams' famous (and not entirely fair) put-down of Henry James, Greenfield had a tendency to chew more than she bit off.

Thus, in *Washington*, the conceit that life amid the political establishment resembles high school, which would seem a serviceable jumping-off place for some more trenchant point, *is* the point, made at such excruciating length that the reader is finally tempted to disagree with it, if only to achieve traction. Similarly, Greenfield observes that reporters who ceaselessly attack politicians for projecting a phony image become party to the phoniness by taking it too seriously. Her insight could serve as an interesting and mildly provocative way to embark on a lengthy case study of some particular politician whose good works were obscured amid coverage of some minor scandal. Instead, she sticks to the generic, tucking in a few brief, reassuringly familiar Washington anecdotes here and there. Even people long dead—as the "raving drunk" she recalls observing on the Senate floor nearly 40 years ago, in the course of writing about how journalists used to ignore such indiscretions, must be—go unmentioned by name if the incidents remain unknown to the general public.

It's a mystery why a woman who mastered many intricacies of government policy—among other things, she reports, she made herself an expert on nuclear strategy—would shy away from expressing views on them in her own voice. Perhaps her exalted social position in Washington, which was so dependent on her status as the *Post*'s editorial chief, made her fret about asserting an identity of her own. Perhaps her bylined writing was where she channeled whatever insecurity she may have felt as a woman who came up in a man's world. Whatever the reason, Greenfield, who, along with Katharine Graham and Ben Bradlee, found a voice for *The Washington Post*, seems, sadly, never to have found one for herself.

TIMOTHY NOAH, *a contributing editor for* The Washington Monthly, *writes the "Chatterbox" column for* Slate.com.

Pretty in Print

By Scott Kaufer

SITTING HOME ON A SUMMER night a few years ago, listening to the Dodgers on the radio, I finally dropped off to sleep around midnight, score tied in the 12th.

I subscribed to two newspapers in those days: the thin and scrappy *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* and the rich and invincible *Los Angeles Times*. So it was surprising the next morning, when the two newspapers hit my driveway within minutes of each other, that the ragtag *Herald* had gotten the job done ("Dodgers Edge Giants in 14") while the mighty *Times* could manage only something like, "Dodgers, Giants Knotted in 9th."

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I called the *Times* to complain. The sports desk transferred me to circulation, where a cheerful senior executive was happy to set me straight. "See the photograph on the front page of the sports section?" he asked. "What do you notice about it?" It was a sailboat. A purely decorative shot, taken in the ocean off Marina Del Rey, unconnected to any story. "Yes, but what else do you notice about it?" he asked me. I had no clue. "It's in color," the *Times* executive said proudly. "We have new color presses, and I'm afraid that means earlier deadlines. So sure, the *Herald* can afford to wait around for those late sports scores. But they don't give you color photos, do they?"

PRIVILEGED SON:
Otis Chandler and the Rise and Fall of the L.A. Times Dynasty
by Dennis McDougal
Perseus, $35.00

So there it was. Joseph Pulitzer wanted newspapers to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable;" *The New York Times* wants "All the News That's Fit to Print;" and at the *Los Angeles Times* the motto seemed to be: "We'll give you sailboats. Get your own news." (OK, it wasn't big news, but still, it was a Dodgers score in a pennant race.)

But maybe the *L.A. Times* got the formula right after all; the *Herald* is dead now while the *Times* prospers, earning buckets of cash as well as the respect of East Coast journalists who fly in to cover L.A.'s cataclysms and conventions. They find on their room-service trays a newspaper fat as a Belgian waffle, with more sections than a grapefruit. And such colorful sailboats!

Still, those of us who trudge up the driveway every morning with our sprinkler-soaked paper are far less sanguine about the *Times*. We know how easy it is to get yardstick-deep into an *L.A. Times* news story without finding even trace elements of a lead. We know that the paper is perpetually timid and clueless in its coverage of show business, a reasonably significant cottage industry in these parts. We know that the *Times*, in its laziness, has historically run obituaries days or even weeks after they appear elsewhere, and, in its arrogance, runs corrections without using the word "correction," preferring the more grudging headline, "For The Record." This is a newspaper that largely ignored the city's minority communities for decades and now feels compelled to pander to them, with a political correctness that neatly blends Orwell with Monty Python. (A friend who worked for the *Times* during L.A.'s 1992 riots turned in a story that referred to looters stealing TV sets from an electronics store. Her editors insisted that "looters" was too incendiary a term and changed it to "protesters." Similar tales abound.) If the *L.A. Times* exhibits arrogance, entitlement, insensitivity (about which it is increasingly sensitive), and, at the same time, painfully good intentions marbled with occasional excellence, perhaps it comes by those traits honestly. They seem to flow directly from Otis Chandler, the paper's longtime publisher, scion of the Chandler dynasty, and the subject of Dennis McDougal's compelling biography *Privileged Son*.

A Southern California surfer who loves race cars and big-game African safaris, Otis Chandler transformed the *Times* from a Republican house organ (for the young Richard Nixon especially) into the well-regarded, if overrated, colossus that mints profits and Pulitzers. McDougal's research is prodigious. He is a first-rate investigative reporter, and equally skilled as a storyteller. And, fortunately, he doesn't confine himself to Otis Chandler, but starts the tale in 19th-century Los Angeles, taking readers to a darker, more muscular, more dissolute place than the sun-kissed, citrus-label portrait usually painted of early L.A.

Otis Chandler, in fact, turns up missing for whole stretches of this book, reflecting perhaps his own ambivalence about running a newspaper in a world where there were still big waves that needed surfing and big game that needed bagging. Even so, McDougal often gives us more Otis than we need—especially in the seemingly interminable passages chronicling the dumping of the first Mrs. Otis Chandler and the selection of the second. (Although there is some gold here about how one trains a San Marino trophy wife.)

Last year the Chicago Tribune Company bought the *L.A. Times*, ending the Chandler family's 116-year reign. So in a very tidy way, theirs was the story of the Southern California century—the story of Hollywood, of suburban sprawl, of land and water, of aerospace and immigration, of Nixon and Reagan. It is powerful material, and McDougal is equal to it.

Of course, if you want to understand Southern California's sunny weirdness and nocturnal nuances, the Chandler to read, now and always, is Raymond.

SCOTT KAUFER, *the former editor-in-chief of* CALIFORNIA *magazine, is a L.A.-based TV producer and writer.*

Who Lost Sigmund?

By E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.

IF YOU ARE INTO EUPHORIMETERS, this book is for you. The Euphorimeter was developed in the 1930s by researchers at Duke University as a test of marriage compatibility for those seeking a mate. The person's level of happiness was measured in "Euphor" units, and the Euphorimeter's purpose was to select a mate with a similar level of such units. The test even promised to locate "the aspect of the personality from which unhappiness arises."

In Therapy We Trust is full of interesting aspects of what the author calls "the therapeutic gospel." For example, in California there are Pet Loss Support Groups, which, in one instance recounted by the author, helped a man come to terms with the death of Fred, his pet boa constrictor. Outside of his support group, the man said, "no one understood what Fred had meant to me." Conversely, if your pet becomes depressed, you can give it Prozac, which now comes as a tablet shaped like a fish especially for cats.

Eva Moskowitz, an historian, has

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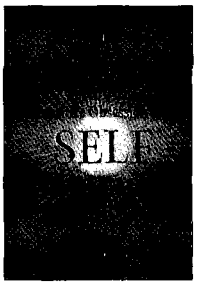
mined popular literature of the late 19th and 20th centuries to document how "Americans developed an intense preoccupation with psychological well-being" so that "today this obsession knows no bounds." She claims that "there are more than 260 [different kinds of] 12-step programs in America ... No other nation in the world puts so much faith in emotional well-being and self-help techniques." Happiness has become an obsession, and "the therapeutic gospel" preaches that "the psychological problems that underlie our failures and unhappiness are in fact treatable and that we can, indeed should, address these problems both individually and as a society." Flourish of trumpets; enter Oprah Winfrey and Ricki Lake.

The author is at her best in documenting America's increasing obsession with its own happiness. From Phineas P. Quimby and the New Thoughters of the 19th century, she resurrects a series of characters, many now almost forgotten, who played crucial roles. There is Paul Popenoe, who started the first "marriage clinics," and Ernest Groves, who introduced marriage counseling into college curriculums. From more recent times, Moskowitz describes mainstream happiness addicts, like Richard Price and Michael Murphy, who founded the Esalen Institute, as well as oddballs such as Arthur Janov ("primal scream therapy") and Jack Rosenberg, aka Werner Erhard. One of the most interesting sections of the book is the author's account of the rise of TV talk shows focusing on psychological problems, from Phil Donahue to Oprah Winfrey to their multitude of increasingly bizarre successors.



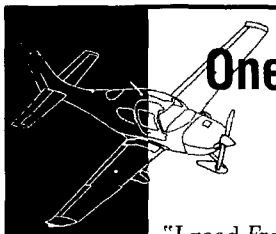
IN THERAPY WE TRUST: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment

by Eva S. Moskowitz

Johns Hopkins University Press, $34.00

In Therapy We Trust is thus a solid historical account, so far as it goes. Its shortcoming—and it is a major one—is that it doesn't go far enough. It almost complete ignores the role of Sigmund Freud and the rise of psychodynamic thought in early 20th-century America in fostering the nation's obsession with psychological problems and happiness. Incredibly, Freud is barely mentioned. The author attempts to explain our obsession with self-fulfillment without any reference to Benjamin Spock or his psychoanalytically-derived ideas of childrearing. She also tries to explain "liberating the psyche" and the social protest movement of the 1960s without any reference to Herbert Marcuse, Paul Goodman, Norman O. Brown, and the other leaders of this movement whose ideas derived directly from Freud's writings.

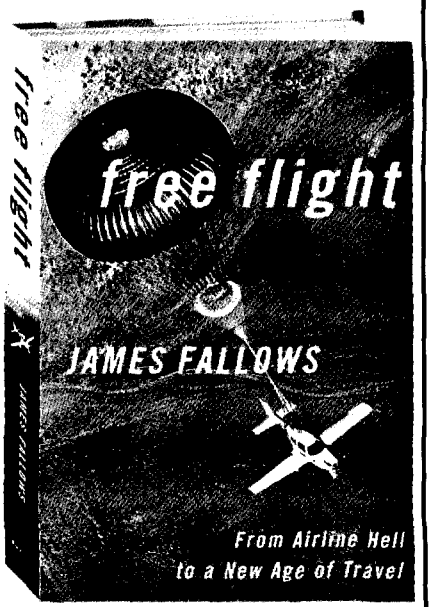
What the author has done, essentially, is to describe the aftermath of a hurricane without mentioning that a hurricane actually occurred. The Euphorimeters and Werner Erhards of 20th-century America were washed up on its beaches by a massive psychodynamic storm, and it is not possible to truly under-



One of the most perceptive writers in America* illuminates the path out of airline hell

"I read *Free Flight*... in the sitting area at Gate B24 at the Cincinnati airport, while waiting for an all-day-long 'equipment problem' to be resolved. It not only made me wish I had Jim Fallows's writing and analytical skills, but also made me want to go out and get my private pilot's license, as he has. **What a great book and what great ideas he's got to solve the modern hell we call air travel.** —CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY, author of *Little Green Men*

"*Free Flight* is a courageous work... and a compelling exploration of the changes already under way. It is classic Fallows, performed with an ease that no other writer could achieve. **Everyone should read it.**" —WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE, author of *Inside the Sky*



PUBLICAFFAIRS
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stand their presence without also appreciating the Freudian wind and rain that brought them here.

The other shortcoming of *In Therapy We Trust* is the author's failure to address the question of "So what?" In the book's final pages, she briefly touches on the relationship of rising self-help to declining religious values. And on the very last page, she notes that "the other main problem with the therapeutic gospel is that the emphasis on individuals and mental healing often comes at the expense of considerations of the larger public good ... Starvation, illness, and warfare ravage the world while we obsess about anxiety, shyness, and denial." The consequences of "the therapeutic gospel" should have received much greater analysis, and my personal Euphorimeter would have registered much higher if the author had included a more extended discussion.

DR. E. FULLER TORREY *is president of the Treatment Advocacy Center in Arlington, Va., and is also Executive Director of the Stanley Foundation Research Programs.*

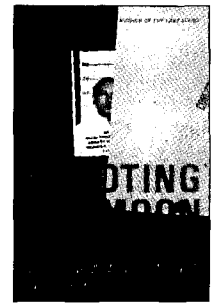
Pablo and Pineapple Face

By Joshua Hammer

WHEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT went to war against Latin America's drug barons in the 1980s, it couldn't have asked for better poster boys than Pablo Escobar and Manuel Noriega. Flamboyant bad guys who reveled in their notoriety, they were greedy, violent, and physically repellent to boot. Both men helped the U.S. government publicly reduce complicated Latin American drug politics to a simple duel between good vs. evil in which the U.S. military was justified in meddling.

Now, as the United States again ramps up its military involvement in Latin American drug wars, two new books revisit the stories of the Panamanian strongman and Colombian kingpin, as well as the U.S. government's sometimes hapless attempts to bring them down. These new books, of vastly differing quality, might serve remind for policymakers that there's no easy military fix to Latin American drug politics.

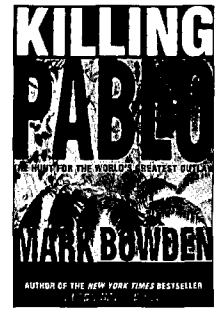
In *Killing Pablo*, Mark Bowden tells how Delta Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the CIA, and an army spy unit known as "Centra Spike" pursued and helped to destroy Colombia's cocaine kingpin. *Shooting the Moon*, by David Harris, recounts the efforts by drug enforcement agents to build a case against Noriega—a campaign that culminated with 20,000 American troops being dispatched to Panama to haul "Pineapple Face" to prison.



SHOOTING THE MOON:
The True Story of an American Manhunt Unlike Any Other, Ever
by David Harris
Little, Brown & Co., $26.00

Fresh on the heels of Steven Soderbergh's bleak film, *Traffic*, both books are reminders of an era when the Reagan and Bush administrations regarded covert operations and direct applications of military might as a legitimate means of stopping the flow of drugs across the border—even as they resorted to violence and violations of sovereignty to achieve their ends.

Bowden has written the far better book. A veteran reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Bowden has produced a taut narrative along the lines of *Black Hawk Down*, his absorbing re-creation of the Olympic Hotel battle in Mogadishu in October 1993. Escobar's saga has been the grist for numerous magazine articles and books, and the early chapters of *Killing Pablo* sometimes feel like a clip job. But Bowden's portrait of Escobar—a pudgy hedonist who idolized the Mexican bandit-revolutionary Pancho Villa and combined public relations genius with an utter lack of conscience—brings to life one of the most mesmerizing villains of recent times.



KILLING PABLO:
A Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw
by Mark Bowden
Atlantic Monthly Press, $25.00

The basic facts of Escobar's ascent are familiar. Beginning his criminal career as a car thief in the slums of Medellín, Escobar clawed his way to the top of Colombia's underworld just as cocaine replaced marijuana as the norteamericanos' recreational drug of choice. Along the way, Escobar became an improbable folk hero. At the height of his power in the early 1980s, Colombia's media celebrated him as a "paisano Robin Hood," and he managed to get elected as an alternate delegate to Colombia's national assembly.

Beneath the calculated image making, however, Escobar was a brutal killer who ordered the murder of hundreds of Colombians. Bowden relates how the drug baron once ordered a servant suspected of stealing from him bound hand and foot and tossed into his swimming pool, where he drowned before horrified guests.

Escobar was also a Machiavellian schemer who ran circles around Colombia's feckless government. In one of the most memorable sections of the book, Bowden recalls the notorious deal he struck with Cesar Gaviria, Colombia's well-meaning, yet hopelessly naive, president. In return for his surrender, Escobar was housed in a customized mountaintop prison known as "La Catedral"—complete with saunas, discos, orgies, and unlimited freedom to run his drug empire.

Gaviria ultimately decided to send troops into La Catedral in 1993 to haul Escobar off to a real prison. But the drug lord escaped during the armed assault, then escalated the bombing and killing campaign. Here Bowden offers some stunning new revelations in his account of the role played by Los Pepes, a clandestine alliance of rival cocaine bosses, right-wing death-squad commandos, and vengeful relatives of Escobar's victims.

After years of fruitless attempts by Colombia's government to derail Escobar, this vigilante squad tracked down and killed many of his relatives and associates—helped by information provided by Centra Spike and other U.S. intelligence-gathering teams. Whether or not the Americans handed their intelligence directly to Los

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Pepes is unclear, but the U.S. government was certainly not displeased by the bloody campaign. Ultimately, however, it was the Colombians, and not the Americans, who finally brought the drug lord down. *Killing Pablo* rises to a satisfying climax with the final cat-and-mouse game led by an aging Colombian colonel and his tech-savvy son, who followed Escobar for weeks through Medellín with a makeshift radio-wave tracking device.

Harris' *Shooting the Moon* could have used some of *Killing Pablo*'s taut narrative structure. Piecing his tale together largely from interviews with Drug Enforcement Administration agents involved in building the 1987 indictment against Noriega, Harris juxtaposes the DEA agents' dogged pursuit of Noriega with the sputtering diplomatic efforts to force him out of power. He tells how Noriega's efforts on behalf of the Nicaraguan Contras endeared him to such Washington powers as CIA director William Casey, who protected him from foes at State and the Pentagon.

Harris describes a litany of botched coups, bungled negotiations, and bureaucratic dust-ups that led inexorably to an invasion by new president George Bush, eager to prove his dedication to the War on Drugs. Still, it's a familiar tale. Fresher are some of the juicy details about Noriega's deals with the Medellín cartel and the parade of sleazy informants who assisted the DEA. Despite the ample supply of new information, however, Harris' story bogs down in a swamp of pumped-up prose and mangled syntax.

Harris has a knack for the wince-inducing turn of phrase: "Still in a state of shock at how far he had fallen, all the energy of his presence remained clenched inside himself," he writes. The book is studded with clichés, and Harris pads his text with numbingly extraneous details, and quotes his sources in unedited chunks filled with obscenity-laced macho talk that slow down the narrative.

In the end, Harris glorifies the grunts who did the spade work against Noriega but fails to offer a judgment on the invasion that landed him in jail. Was it, in the end, a bold expression of American resolve or the needless result of high-level miscalculations? As Harris relates, there were several points between 1985 and 1989 when Noriega might have been nudged into a comfortable exile, sparing Panamanians the trauma of American soldiers shooting up their capital and killing several hundred civilians. But the author never makes clear just why the endless machinations failed. Hyping up the work of his heroic investigators, Harris seems to accept the notion that the American invasion was inevitable, and he offers no lessons for dealing with other tin-pot dictators.

Bowden offers a more jaundiced judgment on Escobar's killing. Six years after the hit, and a decade after Noriega was locked up for 30 years in a Miami penitentiary, the Medellín cartel is dead but the drug lord's successors live on. Cocaine production in Colombia continues to rise and kidnappings and murders are still a near daily occurrence on the streets of Bogota and Medellín.

One would have liked, perhaps, a little more reflection on the U.S. government's current attempts to fight Colombia's cocaine producers by proxy: a half-billion-dollar aid program to Colombia's military that threatens to widen the country's civil war with Marxist guerrillas. That lapse hardly detracts from *Killing Pablo*'s visceral power; it succeeds as a gripping morality tale in which evil finally gets its comeuppance. *Shooting the Moon*, on the other hand, is just one muddled slog to the finish line.

JOSHUA HAMMER *is* NEWSWEEK'S *Jerusalem bureau chief.*

Civilization and a Malcontent

By Nicholas Thompson

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, FELIPE Fernandez-Armesto does his best to deter you from reading his new book, *Civilizations*. He warns that he has written it "in something like a frenzy, anxious to get down what I wanted to say before I forgot it," and, additionally, "few specialist readers have restrained or righted the judgments." If madcap, inaccurate writing isn't enough to discourage you, the

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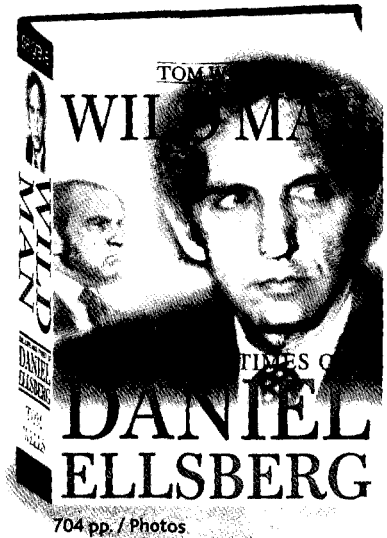

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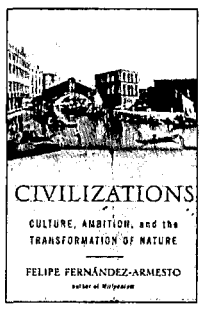
Oxford professor warns of coming inscrutable allusions: "I think literature in which everything is explicit is no fun to read."

Still, the subject of the book is irresistible. As science decodes the human genome, we've been learning the amazing extent to which everyone is made up of the same stuff, from Abyssinians to Ziqualis. So why are the societies we've built so very different? What can an American civilization of Wal-Marts and Hollywood learn from the Kalahari Bushmen? How did a species so genetically connected reach a point where it seems half the world is dieting and the other half is foraging for food?



CIVILIZATIONS:
Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature
by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto
Free Press, $35.00

Trying to discern how civilizations developed was one of the great tasks of historians, from Oswald Spengler to Arnold Toynbee, in the years running up to World War II. But with the Cold War, curiosity about the roots of civilization was substantially edged out by the more immediate struggle between democratic capitalism and communism, both of which claimed to have the formula for how the rest of the world could, and should, develop.

Now, of course, it's clear that the Communists struck out everywhere and, although increasingly dominant, the democratic capitalists have failed to bring benefit to a great deal of the world. Much of sub-Saharan Africa has actually gotten poorer since 1990 and Russians have been longing for Brehznev since not long after they began their capitalist experiment. Unsurprisingly, scholars and readers are now reaching beyond political and economic models for a deeper understanding of how civilizations evolve and why some prosper. David Landes recently published a magnum opus, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, to much acclaim. Jared Diamond's Pulitzer-prize winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, about the mostly environmental reasons the West came to dominate industrial development, has now been on *The New York Times*' paperback best-seller list for more than 100 weeks. *Civilizations* is the next major crack at the topic.

After the discouraging introduction, *Civilizations* gets off to a strong start. Fernandez-Armesto vividly describes the struggle to carve societies out of arctic climates and desert wastes, offering interesting detail on nearly every page, even if, true to his word, the writing can be a little cryptic. He introduces us, for example, to the men and women of Skateholm, in Southern Sweden, who depended on dogs so much for their survival that they were often buried next to their canine companions, often in less dignified graves. They also believed they were descended from a Swedish princess driven into exile "with only her dog for company." Fernandez-Armesto then takes us into the Sahara where blind guides were considered the most effective in the 14th century since "eyesight was delusive in the desert." Next, it's on to the Eurasian steppe where Mongols reportedly "barked like dogs, ate raw flesh, drank their horse's urine, knew no laws, and showed no mercy." Then we're off to the grasslands, the tropics, the mountains, and so on.

In every region, the pattern proves the same: Humans managed to form civilizations no matter the environmental obstacles, always shaping their civilization with the environment. Even the bogs of Frederik Hendrik Island off New Guinea proved hospitable, despite Fernandez-Armesto nominating them as the worst place on earth. The island is a place "of fetid swamp, unhealthy miasmas, shadeless bush, and painful extremes of heat and cold." But people have persevered, building a civilization by dredging parts of the swamp to create mounds on which to build huts and plant their yams. "The men," the author helpfully adds, "delouse their hair by caking it with mud which they remove, when dry, with an inner crust of lice."

Throughout, Fernandez-Armesto tries to stay away from making value judgments over whether one civilization is better than another. But there's an undertone of contempt for modernity. The Bushman, for example, "blends into the bush, hiding from the creatures on whom he preys, and who might prey on him. ... This is as near as you can get to life without civilization." But the Bushmen still prowl through the Kalahari and their society continues today. Thus, "by the most critical measure of success, it is better than civilization." Toward the end of the book, Fernandez-Armesto even harkens back to Gandhi's famous quip when asked what he thought about European civilization, "I would be in favor of it."

In a way, Fernandez-Armesto's distaste for Atlantic civilization is the most interesting idea of the book. But unfortunately, he doesn't follow through, perhaps because it's an awfully tough case to make. If a civilization's highest aspiration should be to modify its environment and survive, are ants more civilized than Romans? Is living in harmony with nature on a dollar a day in the Sahel truly no worse than living in Des Moines? Fernandez-Armesto never gets around to answering these questions, or even really posing them, because he is too busy bouncing from one century and environment to the next. Ultimately, to the extent that Fernandez-Armesto has a thesis, it's that the environment is important and that the way civilizations manage it is important too. Fair enough. But a reader could learn pretty much the same thing by watching the Discovery Channel.

A few years ago, I visited a tiny isolated village in the Dogon country of Mali. It was the kind of place Fernandez-Armesto would love. The whole village appeared to simply rise out of the desert, with huts and a mosque built out of sand. In a custom apparently dating back as far as anyone knew, the village's spiritual father lived in a crevice on the rock face nearby and was only allowed down once a year. It was a beautiful, environmentally sound, fascinating place. And half the children died before they reached adulthood. Many of the rest lived in constant hunger.

There are no easy answers to the question of how the developed world can best share its medicine, technology, and wealth with villages in the Dogon. But that's surely something Fernandez-Armesto should have grappled with.

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Instead, he trundles along with a breezy cultural relativism and an undertone that humanity should actually aspire to something like desert life in the Dogon. *Civilizations* is a fascinating compendium of world history, but it will take another book to synthesize what Fernandez-Armesto has tracked down.

NICHOLAS THOMPSON *is an editor of* The Washington Monthly.

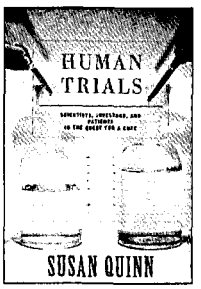
Mice Ain't Men

By Shannon Brownlee

THE VAST MAJORITY OF BOOKS about biotechnology spend endless pages trumpeting the triumphs of genetic medicine and the coming age of wonder drugs. Susan Quinn wants to try something different and instead chronicles the heartbreak of a biotech company that fails, and the dashed hopes of patients in desperate need of its drugs. The result, *Human Trials*, provides a sobering view of why the search for medical miracles involves enormous risk.

Autoimmune, Inc., was founded in 1988 to develop a new class of drugs for treating autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis (MS), diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Autoimmune disorders are caused by a flaw in the immune system, leading it to mistakenly attack parts of the body. The paralysis and numbness of MS, for instance, results when immune cells destroy myelin, the fibrous sheath that surrounds nerve cells and helps them conduct signals. In rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system methodically annihilates the connective tissue and cartilage in joints. All told, several dozen different autoimmune disorders afflict 8.5 million Americans, a gigantic potential market for the company that can produce a treatment.

Autoimmune's founder was Howard Weiner, a prominent neurologist and researcher at Harvard University who specializes in treating MS patients. Fed up with writing grant proposals that weren't getting funded, Weiner turned to investors to support his research after achieving spectacular results in two experiments in animals demonstrating a theory known as oral tolerance. For each autoimmune disease, the immune system targets a specific set of proteins. In MS, it is proteins found only in myelin; in diabetes, proteins in the pancreas; in rheumatoid arthritis, proteins in cartilage. Weiner reasoned that feeding patients tiny doses of the specific proteins in question might retrain the immune system to tolerate, or grow accustomed to them and stop the attacks. When the idea worked in rodents, Weiner was ready to try oral tolerance on human patients.



HUMAN TRIALS:
Scientists, Investors, and Patients in the Quest for a Cure
by Susan Quinn
Perseus Books, $26.00

So far so good, except that Weiner has hardly a clue how oral tolerance actually works, or at least Quinn fails to explain it adequately, leaving the reader to wonder whether this is just some cockamamie idea cooked up by a bright, but overeager doctor and then marketed ferociously to Wall Street. After all, other biotech companies have been founded on even less science (my personal favorite: Shaman Pharmaceuticals, a company that raised millions for expeditions to search for nostrums used by witch doctors). Oral tolerance, as it happens, is a legitimate theory that may well pan out one day as a treatment for autoimmune diseases, but Autoimmue's investors were destined to lose their shirts.

Before reading this book, I had never thought about how devastating a drug's failure must be to those who have pinned not only their fortunes but also their hopes to it. Quinn describes the moment when Weiner and the officers of the company learn that their drug worked no better than a placebo in patients with MS: "Weiner looked nearly ... shattered ... He sat hunched over the table with a hand on his forehead, as though he didn't want to let people see his eyes. His assessment of the results was brutal. 'It was like the feeding of water ... why didn't it work?'"

That is one of the most dramatic moments in the book. Quinn must be the only journalist on the planet who appears not to have a single mean-spirited or skeptical bone in her body. She is so careful not to inject her opinion that the only villain in the story is the immune system. All the human beings come off as well-meaning, sincere, and just so gosh-darned nice. But more important than a lack of drama, *Human Trials* misses an opportunity to tackle some of the thornier issues surrounding drug development.

Quinn gained unusual access, sitting in on private meetings, interviewing investors, researchers, even patients, whose identities are rarely provided to journalists. Yet when a doctor fails to tell a patient she may be on the placebo in a drug trial, a no-no in the protocol of informed consent, Quinn excuses this by saying the patient has been in so many trials she undoubtedly knows she may be randomly assigned to take the placebo. Maybe. But sick people are generally not so clearheaded when they want desperately to believe that their doctor can help them. That's why there are strict rules for informing patients about the risks of participating in clinical trials, rules that are all too frequently bent or broken when doctors have a vested interest in getting patients to agree to join a drug trial. There is scant mention of the struggle between the openness of academic research and the secrecy of private industry. No issue is made of the conflict of interest created when drug companies pay doctors a bonus for finding patients for clinical trials, or how some doctors can convince themselves they've found a cure before they've bothered to actually test it.

Read *Human Trials* for a glimpse into the world of clinical trials, but we'll have to wait for insight into the drug industry's darker secrets.

SHANNON BROWNLEE *is a freelance science writer in Maryland.*

We'll Always Have Paris

By Alan Greenblatt

THE ONLY THING AMERICANS hate worse than sprawl is density. Nobody likes the traffic and the architectural ugliness in and around virtually every metropolitan area in

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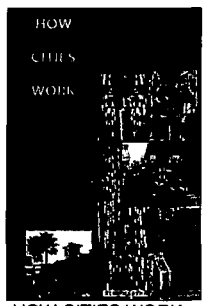
this country, but building on bigger lots and cheaper land remains hard to resist.

Maryland is home to a vaunted smart-growth policy, under which the state refuses to pay for basic infrastructure—water, sewer lines, and roads—to support development outside designated areas. But even there, turning down specific projects that appear to be beneficial has proven tough. Last year, for instance, the state supported construction of a massive new regional mall in Anne Arundel County near Annapolis, even though it despoiled 300 acres of supposedly protected woodland. A top state official told *The Washington Post* the exemption was understandable because people, including her daughters, "are always going to need somewhere to shop."



HOW CITIES WORK:
Suburbs, Sprawl, and the Roads Not Taken

by Alex Marshall
University of Texas Press, $24.00

Alex Marshall, in his new book *How Cities Work*, notes that downtowns and other old-fashioned urban environments were all constructed before the advent of the automobile. Since World War II, cities have been a dead art. Given the cost advantages of centralized, car-dependent warehouse-style stores such as Wal-Mart, we aren't likely to build a new Paris anytime soon.

In Marshall's vision, the central fact about cities is always transportation. Believing that building freeways breeds cars, Marshall's goal in this book is to demonstrate how cityscapes are formed by their main transportation systems—the ports that originally shaped New York or the freeway interchanges behind every suburb in America today.

Much of Marshall's book is devoted to case studies of four metropolitan areas. Two of the chapters are a bit weak. He describes the vitality of a Queens neighborhood called Jackson Heights, but doesn't get at the root of why—or how—it works. He's also a bit utopian in his view of Silicon Valley, wishing that area had preserved more apricot orchards through use of mass transit, while ignoring its lack of enthusiasm for such projects.

But his remaining two portraits are highly instructive. Disney's well-covered development of Celebration, Fla., lends ammunition to Marshall's cogent exposure of the lies behind the trendy "New Urbanism." New Urbanists are academics and architects who seek to revive pedestrian-friendly environments by incorporating design elements from classic urban neighborhoods, such as porches and narrow streets, into a suburban neighborhood. But Marshall argues the New Urbanists are merely dressing up subdivisions in old-fashioned clothing ill-suited to the automobile age, like Hollywood stage sets with pleasant facades that hide their lack of inner workings.

Major arterial roads are still the life-blood of communities such as Celebration, the Kentlands in suburban Maryland, and Mud Island in Memphis. Celebration has a Disney-subsidized downtown complete with restaurants and other amenities for tourists, but no place to get your shoes repaired. Celebration residents have to do their shopping in strip malls outside the development and must drive to their jobs. Celebration's office buildings are well beyond walking distance, placed out by the highway.

Marshall labels New Urbanism "a type of design where form perversely does not follow function." His attention to observable fact makes *How Cities Work* valuable. Backyards in Celebration have been sacrificed for alleyway service roads since garbage trucks can't navigate the cute but narrow main streets. Residents can barely open their car doors when they pull into their little carports. Those who want to live in an urban environment, Marshall argues, should avoid the fakery of the New Urbanism and move to an existing city, where the housing will probably be cheaper anyway.

But he recognizes that the cost of New Urban developments are part of their appeal, allowing home buyers to believe they might meet their neighbors walking the streets, secure in the comfort that these won't be the wrong kinds of neighbors. Marshall is aware that Portland, Oregon, site of his final case study, has enjoyed great success in regional planning in large part due to its racial homogeneity. Getting citizens of the city, suburbs, and surrounding countryside to believe they are all in the same boat has been made much easier by the absence of racial politics that dog regionalist efforts in segregated metropolitan areas such as Buffalo and Washington, D.C.

Marshall expresses his belief in regionalism—the sense that entire metro areas are the true "cities" of today—but he doesn't explore the history or evolution of that decades-old school of thought. Still, his glimpse of Portland shows how it can work. Oregon imposed true growth boundaries, without exemptions for favored malls, to preserve rural land. That has made development within existing urban and suburban areas economically more attractive, guaranteeing markets for a light-rail system that in turn has taken people out of their cars and onto thriving downtown and retail corridor streets.

Aside from questions of race, Marshall worries that the increased cost of living within constrained areas will ultimately create an exclusionary society in the Willamette Valley as bad as any gated community. That's always the drawback to successful metropolitan areas. When they work, the temptation is to preserve them just the way they are, without accounting for the growth that inevitably results.

Marshall is an unapologetic defender of the strong hand of government in making planning decisions and wouldn't mind seeing a $3-per-gallon gasoline tax to help cut down on the number of cars. Even with views to the left of the crunchiest city planner, he does a service in outlining the dynamics behind growth and development in real cities before indulging in pipe dreams or theory. His book is a further amplification of the point Ring Lardner Jr. made half a century ago in his novel *The Ecstasy of Owen Muir*, that everyone in America wants to build and no one wants to maintain.

ALAN GREENBLATT *is a staff writer for* Governing *magazine.*

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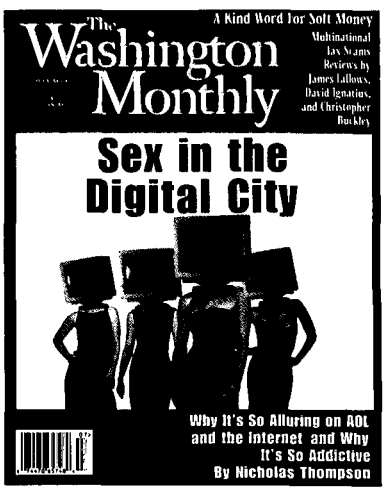

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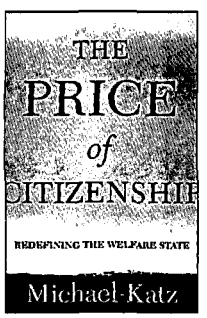
Welfare Nostalgia

By Nicholas Lemann

THE BULK OF MICHAEL KATZ'S *The Price of Citizenship* is taken up by a long compendium of all the ways in which the American welfare state has diminished over the past 20 years. We all know about the abolition of the 60-year-old Aid to Families With Dependent Children program (the one popularly known as "welfare") by President Clinton near the end of his first term. But Katz understands welfare state to denote the whole system of social provision—everything from food stamps to Social Security to unemployment to disability to private pensions. Not just cash grants to the poor but nearly everything, it seems, is tighter and lesser than it used to be.

Katz relentlessly marshals every possible recent example of diminution of the welfare state. Clinton's attempt to create universal national health insurance failed spectacularly, and the ranks of the uninsured are higher today than in 1992. Medicare and, especially, Medicaid, the federal health care program for the poor, have been trimmed back. Meanwhile, private, company-supplied health insurance plans, as most readers will know from experience, have gotten much less generous. Old-fashioned "defined-benefit" company pension plans, under which you'd get a set amount for life in retirement, have disappeared. Social Security, the government's old-age pension and by far the largest and most popular federal program, is almost inevitably going to be cut back. Job security is lower. Labor unions are less powerful. Federal disability and unemployment programs, such as the Social Security disability pension and Unemployment Insurance, have been trimmed. As the federal government has cut back its social-welfare apparatus, many state governments have too. Claims that foundations, community-development groups, churches, and civic organizations can effectively pick up the social-welfare slack are patently hollow.



The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State
by Michael Katz
Metropolitan Books, $35.00

Like most liberals who write about welfare, Katz operates on the assumption that a Western European welfare state, providing open-ended cash grants to people without jobs, universal health insurance, and guaranteed pensions, is the natural and best condition for a modern industrial democracy. He proposes, as the proper relationship between citizen and state, T.H. Marshall's idea of "social citizenship," in which everyone would get from government as a kind of birthright a guarantee of income and health care for life. So a feeling of incredulity pervades his account of one after another aspect of social citizenship being downsized. How could this possibly be happening? he seems always to be asking implicitly.

The Price of Citizenship is a sophisticated, literate, and useful synthesis of material from secondary sources, but Katz has not undertaken to do primary archival research or interviewing that might have led him to offer an original explanation of why the welfare state was cut back. Instead he gives us familiar material, often taken from newspaper accounts, lent a measure of gravity by virtue of having been systematically put in one place and described clearly. For the most part, he ascribes the changes in the welfare state to a political triumph of conservative ideology, achieved through energetic, imaginative, well-funded organizing and propagandizing. Believing that wholeheartedly, as he seems to, allows him to spend very little time considering anti-welfarist arguments on their own terms—either the practical argument that AFDC, at least, hurt its recipients by incentivizing them to have children out of wedlock and to leave the workforce and the mainstream culture, or the philosophical argument that government has no obligation to citizens who, for long stretches of years, don't work. Most politicians, and most citizens, strongly subscribe to both of these arguments. If changing the political climate was Katz's goal, it would have been a good idea for him to persuade us that they are wrong. Instead he has given us a high-quality exercise in preaching to the choir.

At the end of *The Price of Citizenship*, Katz proposes three things: reestablishing some version of the AFDC program; cutting the link between employment and eligibility for federal benefits, especially for mothers; and national health insurance. Right now no prominent national politician, even Ted Kennedy, is loudly campaigning for any of these. During the first year of Bill Clinton's presidency, it looked as if he might pull off health insurance, but those days are long gone. If Americans would accept the overarching principle of social citizenship, they could then be talked into supporting Katz's three goals—but since they haven't accepted it, social citizenship isn't much help.

What would bring the country around to a more welfarist position? The answer one most commonly hears on the left is that the welfare state should be divorced as much as possible from questions of race or even poverty. It should be packaged in a (somewhat misleading) form like that of Social Security—that is, as an insurance program for working people. Clinton demonstrated that this strategy does work. He was able to pass an enormous increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit because that program is not openly a monetary handout to poor people. Katz admires Clinton for having done this, but he doesn't endorse the idea of reviving the welfare state through repackaging, because he believes it shouldn't need repackaging; poor people should get government handouts, dammit. That is intellectually honest of him, but if he believes that simply enumerating the many reductions in the welfare state will cause the process to reverse itself, I bet he's wrong.

NICHOLAS LEMANN *is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *Washington Correspondent for* The New Yorker, *and author of* The Big Test.

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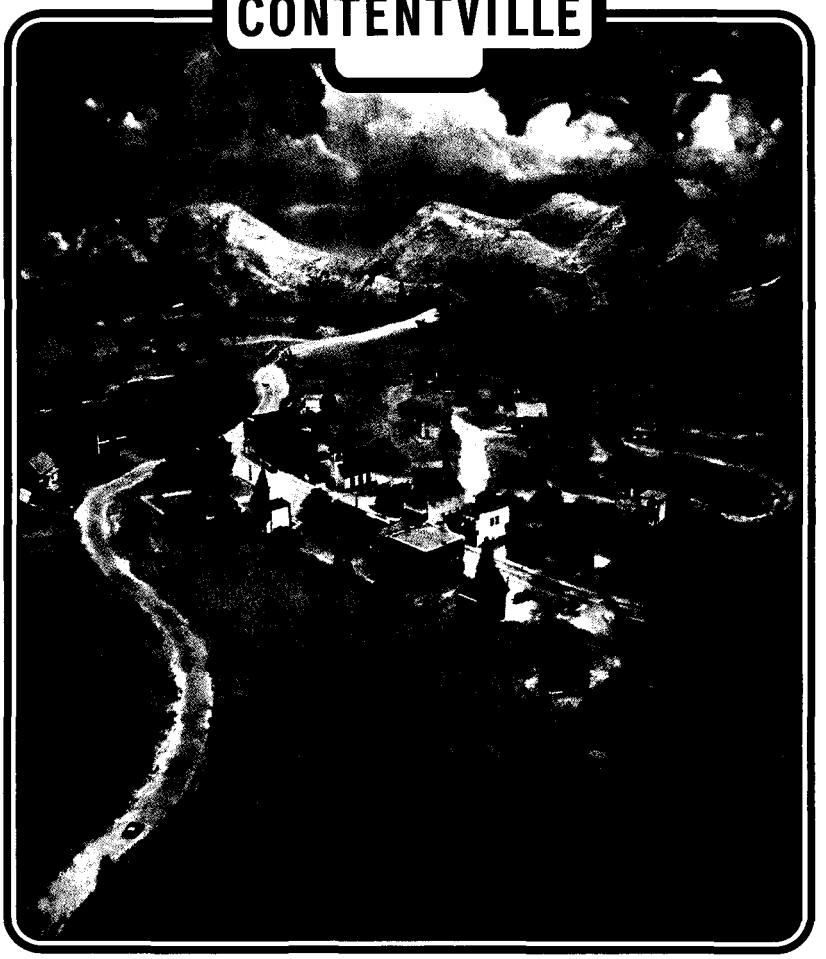

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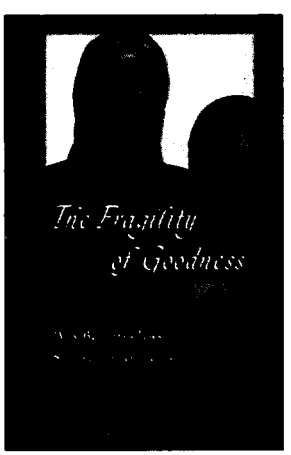

The Fragility of Goodness

Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust

Tzvetan Todorov

Translated by Arthur Denner

With the exception of Denmark, Bulgaria was the only country allied with Nazi Germany that did not annihilate or turn over its Jewish population. Here Tzvetan Todorov assembles and interprets, for the first time, key evidence from this episode of Bulgarian history—most never before translated into any language. Through these documents, he reconstructs what happened in Bulgaria during World War II and recounts the actions of individuals and groups that spared Bulgaria's Jews.

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